In Conversation with Historians: Immigration Justice, Xenophobia, and Histories of Violence
Sept. 29th, 2020
Panel Transcription

Emma Sheinbaum: Welcome everyone and thank you so much for attending, our third installment of the panel series In Conversation with Historians that features graduate students, faculty, and in the future, undergraduate students as well as we discuss current events in relation to historical context. I am Emma Sheinbaum, I am the co-organizer of this event, I am the communications and development coordinator in the department of history here at Columbia University and I'll now turn it over to Saeeda.

Saeeda Islam: Hello and welcome everyone, my name is Saeeda Islam and I'm the faulty affairs coordinator here at the history department at Columbia. This is the [third] panel of In Conversation with Historians and I would like to just say that Emma and I are very pleased with just the attendees and the amount of positive feedback we've gotten and also for all the amazing historians and students who have graciously volunteered their time to join us on this panel every month. It's very important that we have these conversations within our Columbia community but also within our communities at large especially a topic so dear to my heart like immigration. Both of my parents are immigrants and I studied immigration and it's an honor to be with some of the world's most renowned scholars and we have a professor as well and Columbia alum, Brianna, so we're just very, very pleased. Emma's gonna introduce our panelists and we'll let her take it from there.

Emma: Great. We also want to thank our department and our department chair, Adam Kosto, and our supervisor Pat Morel and the Committee on Inclusion and Diversity as well for co-sponsoring this event. And we're so happy to introduce our panelists: Mae Ngai, who is the Long Family Professor of Asian American studies and professor of History, who is a US legal and political historian interested in questions of immigration, citizenship and nationalism. Before becoming a historian, she was a Labor Union organizer and educator in New York CIty working for district 65, UAW and the consortium for worker education. Professor Ngai is also co-director of C-Ser, the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. We also have with us today, Karl Jacoby. Karl is the Allen Navans Professor of American History and a specialist of environmental, borderlands, and native american history. His books include Crimes against Nature, Squatters, Poachers, Thieves and the hidden history of american conservation, Shadows of Dawn - Shadows at Dawn, a Borderlands Massacre, and the violence of history and the strange career of William Ellis, the Texas slave who became a Mexican millionaire. Professor Jacoby is also co-director of C-SER, the Center for the Study of Ethnicity and Race. We also are joined by Pablo Piccato, professor who specializes in Mexican history. He has worked on the political and cultural history of Mexico and the history of crime. He is currently working on an

overview of the history of crime in Mexico during the 20th century. We also welcome back GSAS alum and professor at the College of William and Mary, Brianna Nofil. She is - sorry - assistant professor of history at the College of William and Mary. She earned her PHD here at Columbia, graduating in 2020. She is currently working on a book on the use of local jails in immgiration law enforcement over the 20th century, and as we begin to ask our questions, we also invite you to type any questions that you have for panelist in the chat, and if you are on the livestream, youtube chat or facebook comments as well as the attendees within the zoom chat if you can put it into all panelists as well, and we will try to get to as many as possible throughout the panel. Alright, let's start today's conversation with Mae. Let's just begin with the basics, why do people migrate?

Mae Ngai: Ah, that's a great question. Well, people move all the time. You might move from Manhattan to Brooklyn, or you might move from New YOrk to Ohio, or Virginia, you might just move cross town. And it's only when, and you might go far, and you might move to another to state or another country because your relatives there. So people move all the time and they move for different reasons they move - I think mostly for economic reasons or reasons that you could say are for self-improvement because they sense a better opportunity somewhere else. Maybe their situation is dire and they need to get out to find something that can sustain themselves and their family or maybe it's not so dire but they have an opportunity in another place. And people also move I think for a combination of political and economic reasons it's only very recently that our laws separate these two things and treat them differently and I think that's led to a lot of problems. So let me just finish by adding that it's only when you have nation states that are concerned about their territorial sovereignty that immigraiton becomes a matter of legal and political jurisdiction and then people have all kinds of barriers that they put up conditions for entry, conditions for removal. But that actually is only part of what constitute a migration story. People have been migration from one place to another as long as human history.

Emma: Okay, and to uh follow up with that, let's look at the history of migration and the timeline of when immigration began to be criminalized like when you've discussed this in your book impossible subjects but when did the term settler shift and so if you can speak towards the making and unmaking of illegal aliens.

Mae: Okay well those are two actually somewhat separate questions. The question of criminalization actually it goes back to early modern history, goes back to the english corn laws which were transplanted into the United States in their colonies in New England. So towns pervade people from entering or kick people out if they became indigent and they were considered to not belong. So migration restrictions and rules predate actually they go back to this settlement, colonial settlement, but you raise an important distinction between settlement and immigration. You know a lot of people like to think of america as a nation of immigrants, but the

first people who migrated here who were not indigenous I think were not, should not, properly be called immigrants. They were settlers. They were colonial settlers who were trying to recreate some version of their old country england or France, or whatever in the new world. The spanish, as well, and it's only, I think, in my view in the late 19th century when in-migration shifts from a question of settlement to a question of immigration, which in a sense means that the country is established, the frontier has been reached - that doesn't that these are not ongoing phenomenon they are, and they may continue to be but when people come as immigrants, they come to a place that's already set up.

Saeeda: Thank you for that, Mae. I'm going to ask the next question here for Karl. I had it here, one second. There we go. So Karl, can you please talk about pre-wall on the US-Mexico border, what was there and what was the border violence like, and how has it evolved. Please if you could provide some context of the new border wall's implications.

Karl Jacoby: Sure, I thought the way I might answer this would just be talking about the creation of the current US-Mexico border and because I think this is a discussion that this history is very much forgotten in the united states, it's very present and aware in mexico but it's something that we don't think about much in the United States. I would say the war with Mexico which is all traced back to the war with Mexico which is 1846 to 1848 and this is really one of our most naked land grabs in American history I should bracket that a little bit by saying that all of the wars that the United States, the majority of wars at the United States have also been land grabs against indigenous people but in the sense the United States justified these by thinking about indigenous people, and here I'm quoting the supreme court and it's somewhat offensive language but just to get a sense of how around the time of the war with Mexico the United States was already thinking about indigenous people, they were calling them pure savages with only a right of occupancy to land. Now, you know Mexico get its independence this is from a supreme court case in 1823 about indigenous land rights, when Mexico becomes independent, initially the United States kind of flatters itself that Mexico is a sister republic and it's legible to the United STates as a another nation state, as a sovereign nation. It has many thing that seem parallel to the United States - a constitution, a president, a congress, diplomats, flags, generals - all these sorts of things. And so there's this brief moment where it seems the US likes to flatter itself that mexico wants to become like them and they are sort on a similar trajectory. But then, Texas secedes from Mexico, mainly so that it can keep slavery there. The United States annexes Texas against Mexico's wishes because it's basically a rebel province that should be returned to Mexico it then provokes a war with Mexico by sending US troops farther and farther into Mexico and the US until New Mexico finally fights back and then it uses this as a pretext to seize all of the northern half of mexico all the way to California. So the point here that I think this is interesting is or why it sort of illuminates a little bit there's a lot of sort of fixation I think in contemporary discourse about the supposed illegality of people crossing the border without

documentation. There's very little discussion obviously about the legality of this land grab of the border crossing people in the 19th century without permission in this very sort of transparent way that really the border that we have today is an artifact of anit-indigenous policies and of slavery, the need for more land for slavery during this time period. I think the other thing that's really noticeable for me about the war is that there is actually, the war is often remembered at least in the United States as not really much of a conflict at all a very easily won conflict. There's actually very fierce mexican resistance, Mexico actually wins the first battle the one that triggers the war, and there's a very effective mexican guerilla warfare against the United States. But this is very much de-politicized, that the United States talks about these people not as guerillas, not as you know engaged in the political program of opposing the united states' occupation, but their bandits. So this discourse about bandits which you saw when President Trump announced his bid for the presidency four years ago, you know the sort of presentations, criminalization of Mexicans and their behavior has very deep roots that I think can be traced all the way back to the war with Mexico. And so in many ways the border wall is just a monument to these very deep, this very deep 19th century history that a lot of people tend to overlook and gloss over.

Emma: Thank you so much for providing so much context, and Pablo if you could join in and maybe if you want to add on to that if you have any other context, or provide a brief history of Mexico and the discussion of lands and borders and perhaps how they've changed over time and how those relationships have been affected with other nations and maybe perhaps the irony, speaking towards the irony of the treaties between US and Mexico and how those have been respected or not respected.

Pablo Piccato: Well, I wouldn't have much to add to Karl's description from the Mexican history point of view, the war with the US was something in a way inevitable and that has been you know recognized by Mexican historians as a product of the weakness of the Mexican state after the independence. The mexican government lost mining revenue, it lost the important place it had in the spanish empire. So the decades in which Karl mentions US recognized Mexico as a real country were also the decades in which the Mexican state fell into instability and lack of resources and emergence of a military class that controls politics. So when the war came, many people saw this as an inevitable consequence of centralism - a movement within Mexico that was intended to replace federalism, which was you know, kind of the natural way in which the country came together, much like the US. So Texas is a response to centralism, in the eyes of many Mexicans and the defeat of 46 is seen as obviously as an unfair appropriation but also as a product of our own mistakes as a product of our own divisions and lack of patriotism and weakness. So the history that comes after that is very complicated because it's not seen simply as unlawful appropriation but as kind of a lesson about what can happen to the Mexican country if there's no unity and there's internal fighting. So it's obviously very ironic, because after 46, a lot of Mexicans were left on the other side of the border and that didn't really change them. They

continued to you know live their same lives but they were in a different country. So what we see at that moment that you know really it's very important to go back there is that we have the divergence of two histories. So for Mexico as a country, and Mexico as a presence in the US with a population that is very rooted and has been there for you know as long as the anglos(?) have been. So it's two histories in a way that starts.

Saeeda: Thank you so much for that Pablo, my next question is for Brianna. Can you tell us how does ICE operate, I know that's a loaded question, but if you could just simplify it as best you can, what is their protocol and really if they have one - I often ask myself that question.

Brianna Nofil: Yeah right it's a good question. I guess you know ICE has only been around since 2003, and it's created in this moment of kind of post-9/11 bureaucratic restructuring that gives us the department of homeland security and if you're confused about its mission I think that's kind of by design. It has one of those missions that's both incredibly expansive but also somehow like very ill-defined. So I guess generally they see themselves as kind of having two tracks of what their work does. So the side that we hear about I think a little bit less is what they call homeland security investigations, so that division deals with criminal movement of people, goods, and money across borders. And then the side we hear about more, kind of really the core of their work, is called enforcement and removal operations and that has to do with all of the enforcement of civil US immigration law and also overseeing the 40,000 detention beds that the US maintains. And so I think that the reality that there is this kind of lack of clarity in ICE's mission and in like what ICE's priorities are, make it really flexible and kind of make it able to suit and be used by various political agendas. So thinking about like what is their protocol, I think that part of the reason that question is challenging to figure out is that because the work of ICE isn't just being carried out by ICe agents, right, its also being carried out by local law enforcement and by this just huge array of federal contracts and you know, really critically by private prison companies and the tens of thousands of people employed by private prison companies. So like I guess with detention you know like one of the critiques that immigraton advocates made across the 20th century is that not only the immigrant detainees have less due process rights than other incarcerated people but that also they were being held in these kinds of physical spaces that were much less regulated. And they weren't saying that prisons were great but they were like at least there's some kind of standard here - we don't have these standards for immigration detention and that speaks to a lack of protocol and I think that the reasons that there aren't protocols is partially a reflection of kind of how many different groups interests intersect with ICE work so you know you have private prison companies who want to keep the margins high you have an immigration service that wants to be able to kind of put up and shut down immigration sites as problems as arise and you have like a US government that wants to ensure it can put up a site very quickly if like a immigration emergency happens, right. So yeah I think broadly these are all factors that dissuade the agency from kind of creating more set standards

and we also know the standards we do have have been quite radically eroded over the past several years so.

Saeeda: Thank you for the clarification Brianna. My next question is for Mae. Where did this idea of limiting migration come from and how did that produce criminalization of immigration?

Mae: Thank you for asking that question, it's really important because I think we have a situation where I think over the last maybe 75 years or more the idea that we need to restrict immigration, we need to have a number a ceiling on the number, that's become completely normalized in American political and legal thinking, so the idea that we should have no number is completely unthinkable for many people. And yet, that wasn't always the case historically. Up until the 1920s, there was no numerical ceiling on how many people could come and immigration was largely governed by the labor market, both by pull as well as push right. So there were exclusions based on if you were proper or criminal or if you were Chinese but there was no numerical restriction and that becomes thoroughly normalized but if you think about in other parts of the world there aren't these kinds of barriers between countries and one of the big innovations of the European Union was to have free migration between among the EU states. So they drew a fortress around Europe, but within Europe, right, there was basically open migration. So I think the first thing we have to do is to think about these restrictions as being historically produced - there's nothing natural about them or inevitable about them. Now why did it happen in the 1920s well I think it happened in large part as a response to nativist opposition to immigrants from Europe - italians, Jews, Slavs, etc. who were accused of all kinds of things that would sound very familiar to people today - they're dirty, they're different, they have a different religion, they're lazy, they don't learn english, they live in unsanitary conditions, you know, all they have diseases - all the things you hear today were said at the turn of the 20th century. And it was until after WWI that there had been political momentum to achieve a restrictive law and the law put a ceiling that limited migration to 15 percent of the pre-world war one annual average. 15% that's a huge drop. Now once you say there's a restriction, then you have the inevitability that there's going to be so-called illegal entry or unauthorized entry, because if you have a ceiling of X, then the person who's X + 1 is the undocumented person so that's another important thing about this whole question which is that undocumented immigration is not something that has to do with, say, the individual, it's not a character flaw of the migrant, it's purely a product of the numbers and if you raise a ceiling you would potential have fewer people entering without documents and if you had no ceiling at all, people are afraid that we would be overrun with migrants but at the turn of the 20th century when we had no ceilings, we weren't overrun quote-unquote you know it kind of figured itself out, so I think that this is something that I you know actually before 9/11 that summer, then-president Bush and President Vincente Fox of Mexico were acutally planning to meet to discuss opening the US-Mexico to a much more relaxed immigration system and then you know that of course went out the window.

Karl: CAn I just add one quick follow-up point?

Saeeda: Yes, please do.

Karl: All the really important points that Mae made I think it's really instructive just to compare 19th century borders and 20th century borders. In the 19th century, borders are pretty much open to keep the flow of peoples with this early exception of immigrants from china in the case of the United States. They were actually fairly stick in terms of the flow of goods - so the United States doesn't have income taxes in the 19th century, it generates most of its revenue actually from duties on goods as a way of protecting domestic manufacturers. So people can flow easily goods cannot flow easily, capital cannot flow so easily.

Mae: Opposite now, right?

Karl: Exactly, and so now our borders, we've done all these things like NAFTA and it's the sequel which are all about allowing goods and capital to flow very easily across borders, but over time, we've actually seen the flow of people across borders get incredibly difficult and so it's a real, sort of the inverse situation of where we were in the 19th century and this is why I think it's important to have a historical perspective on what's going on because people talk about sort of we live in this multinational or whatever inter/transnational world, but somehow in the 19th century was much more transnational for the flow of people than our current moment is right now.
Mae: That's what you had to have an empire to keep your goods flowing.

Saeeda: So my follow-up question to that, Mae and whoever else would like to answer as well, how does a government turn asylum seekers into quote illegal aliens both in policy and in public discourse, and this is something that you talk about a lot, so.

Mae: Yeah that's a really, really important point right now because actually the most of the pressure on the southern border is not from mexican migrants, but from central american migrants and they for the most part, have come to ask for asylum. Now that's become a very tricky business, they are fleeing for sure violence and instability in their home countries much of which is caused by proliferation of gangs and so they are asking for asylum. But they also, you know, as I said before, migration is usually a combination of economic and political motives and so people are also leaving central america because life is precarious there, it's not only violence but also economically precarious. And we should acknowledge that and respect that. Now the problem with the law is that it says you are either an economic migrants or you are a political asylum seeker or refugee and the eligibility to be a refugee or asylee is actually very narrow and

these are, we think of these as human rights norms but they were really crafted as cold war measures, right, mostly to help people leaving communist countries in European and then later the Soviet Union - they didn't even want Chinese communist refugees, they were for european communist refugees and you had to be an individual who was individually persecuted, tortured, or otherwise threatened on account of your religion or ideology, race, etc. So these are very narrow grounds, rules that anybody who say, is a climate refugee, anybody who leaves an area of violence, who is not personally been persecuted or tortured, it's actually a very small eye of a needle to thread and so the rate of rejection of central americans asylum seekers is extraordinarily high, it's up over 75% and now under the Trump administration, of course, they don't even give you a hearing, they just decide, border patrol decides you're not eligible - boom and you're gone. So that's how they turn asylum seekers into so-called illegal aliens and at this point we're not even giving them the right to have hearings and so it's a complete travesty of the law as problematic as the law is.

Emma: If anyone else wanted to add any thoughts on asylum we can now but we also have a question in the chat that I'll incorporate in, from Mika, Hadn't there been nativism and xenophobia in the mid 19th century as well as in the 1920s, that cannot alone explain the new immigratoin limits, does technology, e.g. better transportation explain why only in the 20th century was a ceiling introduced and that's for anyone who would like to respond.

Mae Ngai: Well, absolutely there is nativism in the mid 19th century. There was tremendous hostility, especially towards Irish, especially with famine Irish, who were opposed not only because they were Catholics, but because they were poor. And many of them were deported, but under state laws, because until 1875, immigration was not governed by federal policy. But states like Massachusetts and New York especially had vigourous screening and deportation and removal for Irish people. So, yes, you're right, nativism has a very long history and it chooses its targets according to circumstance- and you know there were Chinese who were suited all together, and then later the Europeans at the turn of the century. But I think that one of the differences in the United States' 1920s as opposed to 1900 or 1850 is that the United States by then already has what you might call a mature industrial economy. A lot of the huge numbers of migrants who came from Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries- they were the muscle that built the industry and cities of this country, and so the expansion of the economy and the increase in the gross national product, came not from the increases in productivity, but from sheer numbers of people doing work. And by 1920, you have productivity increases more through technology and they would discipline- they don't need as many bodies as they did before.

Pablo Piccato:

And can we say, Mae, even though there was nativism in the 19th century, and you know is was a full racist sense, there's something different now because of the legal construction of the foreigner and the ability of the state to enforce those laws through the system that Brianna knows very well, the really nice rights to people, so I think that that's perhaps the answer of the question that was posted in the chat- there's a long tradition, but something is new today which is the layers of law, the state capacity to enforce it, and the political news of the same nativism. I mean- which, I don't know if you agree, but is different today than the uses of xenophobia that we have in the past.

May Ngai:
Yeah, you're right. I agree with that. And then I would also say that you know in our own time, I mean you have the racism- I mean after 1965, immigration into the United States came to be increasingly from non-european areas- that was new- right- so that in the early 20th century, 90% were from Europe, and by the year 2000, 80- close to 90%- are non european, so that's definitely a question that ties into the long history of US imperialism, and racism towards people in the so called "third world"- that's definitely true. I also want to say that immigration law is selective- the reason why there are so many apprehensions at the southern borders is because that's where you put the border control- right- I mean you put them somewhere else- you put them in Maine- you may be picking up a different type of person. So it's very selective, and you know when immigration was so high from Latin America and Asia in 19990, they added a diversity quota, so there would be more white immigrants- so they wanted to have more white people come, and the irony of the people who took advantage of that- there were some Europeans, but a lot of Africans took advantage of that- because you had to have a history of low immigration. So it's also very selective- where they have raids, and Brianna knows about this, where raids take place, where the border control is stationed, where they give new visas to.

Karl Jacoby:
Yeah, can I just add two points in there? One of them is that you don't often hear about it in immigration enforcement issues, but one of the groups that is deported at the highest rate is Haitian people and that is often because the African American community is so overpoliced already, and so they become caught up in these nets and are deported. The other issue that I think, and we'll get to this later in one of the questions, we've allowed for centuries this very extreme enforcement mechanism along the border, particularly the border with mexico, and I think this is a very interesting historical moment where we are seeing these institutions and policies that were developed mainly targeting latinos being extended into the century of the country and catching increasingly other people like white protesters in Portland, and what white protestors in Portland face is that they are shocked and outraged, but if they had been paying attention to what had been happening on the order for a century, they would realize what other communities had been facing this level of intense policing for a very very long period of time.

Emma Sheinbaum:
Thank you for noting those as well. Thank you all for your responses to that question, and thank you for that question. And Karl, how has- I guess this seems like a little shifting of gears, but we will definitely be circling back to race topics (it's all connected) but how has the American history of destroying indigenous and native ways of life and lives negatively impacted the literal nature and environment of this country and- for example: the increasing wildfires in the west coast, and the seemingly expedited climate change that we are all experiencing, and I guess, that's the question.

Karl Jacoby:

Yeah, no and that's a great question obviously, and I think that we've seen how we are all connected with this- a few weeks ago in New York there was a huge plume of smoke over the city that was all to be traced to the fires out on the west coast. When the United States sees in the northern half of Mexico- one of the main differences is that these tend to be arid lands, more arid lands than the United States had ever faced before, and there's a fairly well known report- John Weseley Powell comes out on 1879 on the report of the arid lands: Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, California and his big conclusion is that the way to protect these landscapes and deal with the aridity is to remove native people from the landscape. In many respects the United States is already doing this, right, is a certain colonial nation, its removing people from- siposessing native peoples integral to basically creating settlers- creating settlers the way Mae was talking, and this adds and extra layer to the argument which is to say that environmentally to conserve nature you need to remove indigenous people from the landscape particularly because they were using culturally prescribed burning- it's basically setting low level fires that will open up new growth and will prevent these raging forest fires that we have now because it uses up the fuel. We can really think about it as a more distant or unrecognised form of cultivation that works really well for the indigenous peoples and what we're are facing now, if we remove indigenous people from the landscape, the landscape in essence becomes a historical text, and you can see the consequences of what happened - the loss of knowledge, not the indigenous communities of knowledge, but non indigenous people have blinded themselves to these sorts of knowledge that can be used. The other thing obviously is the creation of the border that cuts through dozens of indigenous homelands, and this is a big issue that we are seeing right now- I don't think there has been nearly enough coverage in the news, but in Southern California, with … people and in Southern Arizona there's been a lot of complaints that they're rebuilding the big new border wall right through these indigenous homelands, and really cutting people off from ritual sites. And I went to a conference at the Yaqui Pasqua in Arizona were putting on recently, where they were complaining how often they have to go across the border with ritual items and border control people are often tear apart their ritual items to see if they have drugs in

side or not, and the border is also doing another form of violence against these indigenous uses of the landscape as well- so those are two of the really obvious dimensions of what we are seeing in the west.

Emma Sheinbaum:
Thank you. This actually seems to be- this can be for anyone- but we also have another question from the chat that is related to this line of thought. Early on Karl you mentioned that the US-Mexico border was built with anti-indigenous purposes. To what extent does that continue to be true- how are idigenous groups considered in these conversations about immigration- maybe you have already addressed that, but...

Karl Jacoby:
Well, it's interesting. I'd say that the very first group that the border tries to control is indigenous people, so the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo actually is trying to control the crossing of indigenous people across the border. You know, in terms of immigrants, indigenous people are not seen as immigrants- when its immigrants, as Mae was talking, it was the Chinese, but the early target of the use of the borders, really trying to control indigenous mobility and basically, it's interesting, the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo when you see the border, its creating a Mexico and a US, and completely erasing the presence of any indigenous homelands at all, and most of that land actually, in some ways the United states has to fight in essence two wars- they fight over the war against Mexico in 1846-48, to claim the land from Mexico. Mexico has its own process of trying to claim that land from indigenous people, and the United states fights a much linger and more brutal war which you know, in cases of California, has some of the worst examples of genocide in American history of claiming this land then from indigenous communities. Certainly the issue of immigration is a lot of indigenous people like to have their own rights to cross as members of indigenous communities recognizes, and being able to cross on their own passports, and have to have their sovereignty recognized, and in some ways they would like to sort of set themselves outside of the the discussion of immigration and really focus on the issue that this is an indigenous homeland that has pre existed long before the US and Mexico existed, and we have a preexisting right to be recognized. And so that's certainly something that in the last, as this conversation is evolved, and as the enforcement mechanism as Brianna was talking about, after 2003, when you get the department of homeland of security in this massive expansion of the security apparatus there, the indigenous communities have then tried to get more organized about themselves to present a united front on this particular claim.

Mae Ngai:
Can I add something to this? Something that Karl and I both teach a course on ethnic studies called Colonization and Economization, and when we talk about native America, one thing that we talk about in my class is that some of the first borders and walls and fences that were built,

were built by English colonists in Virginia to demarcate a line on which Native peoples were not supposed to cross- right? And so the thing is that they kept moving that- they kept moving the line westward as they kept encroaching on the line that they set up themselves. In a way you could say that the very first walls and borders that were erected in the American colonies were against native peoples.

Karl Jacoby:
Yep, that's right, definitely.

Mae Ngai:
So if you're listening, take this course!

Emma Sheinbaum:
I want to take this course! Thank you for those responses. Brianna, how does, I know that again this is a very loaded question, how does, if you could break this down for us in the simplest ways possible, how does ICE and local sheriff departments work together, or rather how do ICE and local sheriff departments work together in policing people and enforcing immigration laws. Are they two different entities? Or one and the same?

Brianna Nofit:
Thanks, Emma. Thats a great question and I think that this gets us back to the point that we were making earlier about how does ICE choose to use its resources, right, they have a kind of finite, theoretically finite number of dollars, and collaborating with local law enforcement is one of the major ways that they are able to go beyond maybe what their budget normally would entail. So sheriffs have been really powerful allies with the immigration service, and you know, we have records from the early 20th century talking about the immigration services that we've had have had to get sheriffs on board with this project, and the reason is not because they think that the sheriffs are going to enforce immigration law, the reason is because the sheriffs control the jails and the immigration service sees these jails as integral to carrying out deportations, to carrying out Chinese exclusion. And so I think that these partnerships, these long enduring partnerships between the imigration service and local law enforcement- they are a way for the immigration service to legitimize and make their work seem like legible law and order work, and I think it is a way for them to punch above their weight a little bit, and in turn, what do the sheriffs get out of it, right, throughout the 20th century what they're getting out of it is federal money, and they are able to do things like expand their jails because they've got more inmates and they're able in some cases to cut taxes for communities, and so communities and federal immigration service come to see this as a really potentially beneficial relationship. And, you know, today these relationships are more expansive than ever, we know that the immigration service isn't just using local law enforcement like to borrow resources or to borrow space, but they come to see it as

their main way to identify removable people, and so we know that the path to ending up on ICE's radar now frequently goes through the criminal justice system. Yeah, and I guess the other point I'd just make about thinking about sheriffs and thinking about counties is that these relationships look totally different ways- there's 3000 counties in the US and each of them has their own relationship with ICE, so on the one end, you have counties that are embracing short policies and have minimal cooperation with ICE, and on the other end you have counties where ICE is set up in the police precinct and the jailers are going to ICE training camps, and maybe the glass half full take on all of that is that it does give activists a juncture- there's a place to apply pressure there, because there's latitude local officials in determining what sort of relationship and how much they want to collaborate and cooperate with federal immigration law enforcement.

Mae Ngai:
We should note too that local jurisdictions cannot be forced by the federal government to cooperate with them. That's why so-called sanctuary jurisdictions are entirely legal in the constitution. So I think that Brianna's work is really brilliant in showing this and how immigration enforcement is not possible without local cooperation. The federal government does not have the capacity, never has, and today we have 10 million undocumented persons in teh United States- they absolutely cannot do what they want to do without including local law enforcement, and so that's where I think you're really right Brianna, that activists can really put a monkey wrench, and gum up the wheels in this sense by forestalling that cooperation and putting pressure on local officials to not cooperate.

Saeeda Islam:
Thank you Brianna and Mae. Our next question is for Pablo- How did Trump and previous administrations exploit the xenophobic and racist "violent Mexican" narrative to further their political agendas and how can we work against this rhetoric?

Pablo Piccato:
Well, as Karl mentioned, the image of Mexicans as bandits has a long history, but one important chapter in the history of the Mexican Revolution is that US troops were massed in front of the border- there was even an expedition of US troops into Mexico in 1916, and there was this idea of Mexico as an anarchic and violent country. But the most relevant conflicts is, I think, something that has happened in the last 30-40 years which is the increasing pressure from US governments to criminalize, to enforce the laws against drug trafficking in Mexico has created pressure on the Mexican government that in turn has increased enforcement and the role of security forces to fight against drug trafficking- so we have a progression of violence since the 80s- one can say that an important date is 1986 when the Guadalajara cartel killed Enrique Camarena, the agent in Guadalajara, and that really put a lot of pressure on the Mexican

government to start arresting people. The result is that we have more infighting between criminal groups in mexico- more violence in the country as a whole, and an idea that Mexicans are violent- that has spread beyond the US. It's really paradoxical because in many ways its the violence that is determined by law enforcement pressure is also made possible by US weapons that are very easily brought across the border and transported into Mexico and is financed by US consumers because they buy the drugs that make these criminal organizations so powerful, and even we have a few examples of US citizens becoming very important actors as Sicario sort of enforcers in the US like- there's certain characters that became very famous that were US citizens. The reality is that Mexican drug organizations are very careful not to use violence across the border- not to create trouble or to attack US citizens. In terms of the political uses of this- it is clear that the enforcement of the border and the number of deportations grew very fast during the Obama administration. What we have there is not just high numbers of people deported back into Mexico but a lot of people in prisons, in US prisons, be sent back to Mexico- tens of thousands of them which have their precautions in Mexico too. So, what we see today being capitalized politically is something that didn't start solely in 2016 or in 2015 when Trump said that "Mexicans were rapists". It is something that has been building- even to Mexicans but also these political uses of this fear of Mexicans. So what we have today is again a similar contradiction between the reality of immigrants as statistically people who commit fewer crimes than native ones, right, because that has been proved, but the idea that they are dangerous and that they are connected with violent crime, right? The idea that Mexicans are dangerous and the reality that hate crimes against people from Mexico and Latin America are increasing- that there are in fact victims of violent crime more often than not. And, you know, the kind of broader contradiction of the true origins were drugs that have been plaguing Mexico the last couple of decades.

Mae Ngai:
Can I ask Pablo a question?

Karl Jacoby:
I would like to add some points afterwards- go ahead.

Mae Ngai:
Okay, the United States is a very violent country. We have tremendously high rates of gun violence, crime, and you know, etcetera, so do you have any comparing data that show the relative incidence of violent crime in the United States versus Mexico?

Pablo Piccato:
Well, the best way to cimpare this is not very precise- is murder rates- how many people get killed per hundred throusand inhabitants- thats something that we can compare across countries.

And the rate in Mexico is higher than that in the US, but one of the mistakes that we make when we compare these things is that we look at countries as a whole. If we look at the murder rate in Yucatán, it is extremely low; maybe 1 or 2 per hundred thousand. If we look at the murder rate in some cities in the US, it is higher than the average in Mexico. Now if we look at certain regions of Mexico, and this has been shifting in the last 10 years, you know, it used to be some cities on the border, and it is now Michoacan, Guerrero, are very high, Oaxaca, we have very high rates of murder, but theyre very concentrated in a few municipalities. If we compare those rates even with the rates in Venezuela and Brazil and Honduras, they are average- they're not outrageous, but they're high, right? So, I think it's a difficult comparison, but I wouldn't just say that Mexico is more dangerous than the US; that's such a broad statement that is impossible to prove.

Karl Jacoby:
I just wanted to build on what Pablo is saying about the sort of militarization of borders. I think that there is a very long history of this that certainly goes back to the Mexican Revolution. In fact one of the things that is really interesting is how much the intervention in Mexico was almost a dress rehearsal of the United States before it went to fight overseas during WWI. So General Pershing who actually gets his start chasing Apaches along the US-Mexico border, but then leads the intervention that tries to capture Poncho Villa, and the US's first use of airplanes and tanks and machine guns- all these things- in the military setting is actually along the Mexico border before they get to Europe. And in many ways I think that the border still continues to be this laboratory where they experiment with drone warfare and all of these other sorts of things- these heat rays that now they're supposed to use- these microwave heat rays that are supposed to heat you up and repel people. Basically, we allow ourselves to do things along the border that we wouldn't allow ourselves to do elsewhere. It's become this long standing laboratory for this kind of behavior. And one other thing that- this sort of builds on what Brianna was saying- that I think has accentuated this is when you get the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2003 that combines this idea of war against terror and war against narcos- the war that preexists. And they kind of get combined and you have these fever dreams, and I think that there is little to no evidence of narcos and terrorists working together. They have very different motivations and objectives, so it never happens, but they have been congealed into this idea that there is a narco-terrorist threat along the border has congealed them into popular memory- the popular mind. The last point, building again on Pablo and on even this; a lot of cities (the cities on the border) on the US side of the border are actually some of safest cities in the country. El Paso is very safe. San Diego is very very safe. San Antonio is very safe. So proximity to Mexico has nothing to do with violence, and as Mae's question was suggesting, we have a lot of our own organic reasons for violence here which are completely unconnected to proximity to Mexico.

Mae Ngai:
Or immigration, at all.

Emma Sheinbaum:
Thank you for that. I am learning so much. Karl, you were quoted in a recent article by Russell Contreras of the Associated Press on the Mexican-US underground railroad which I have never heard of before. For everyone who hasn't read it yet, can you give a brief summary of the findings?

Karl Jacoby:
Sure. So I think we're all familiar with the more familiar underground railroad that we think of in the antebellum 19th century pre-Civil War that allowed enslaved people to self-emancipate by going North, you know, Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, all of those examples. But what's interesting about both Fredrick Douglass and Harriet Tubman as examples is that they're both from the very far north of the South- theyre both from Maryland- and though with their close priximinty to the North and its remarkable what they did, but it was a fairly short; really the center of gravity for slavery, for enslavement, in the antebellum period is moving south and west, is moving into Texas; it's in Louisiana, it's in Mississipi, and increasingly in Texas. For people there, the real place to run is not north, which is an incredibly long and impossible journey, but it's to go south into Mexico, and we don't have exact numbers- the best estimates I've seen are about 5000 people are doing this- but there's a very steady flow of people, of enslaved African Americans for whom Mexico represents the land of freedom during this time period. And it's been hard for a lot of Americans to realize this in part because we just don't know any Mexican history, but also because the idea of running north still suggests that the US is still the land of liberty, but to really turn that on its head and say that actually you needed to go south and out of the United States together for emancipation is a little more jarring for America, and in fact after the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 of course, the South could reach into the North and seize slaves and in some places like New York, but they could not reach into Mexico. In fact, Mexico refuses to sign a treaty of extradition that will return enslaved people to their enslavers in the United States. And this is a little hard to prove, but I feel like one of the last places that Robert E. Lee is before the Civil War breaks out is south- he's on the border of Mexico, and he's chasing around fugitive slaves, and supposed Mexican bandits, and there's a lot of tension over fugitive slaves in Mexico, and I feel that it is not at all impossible that Mexico and the US would have gone to war again over this issue had the Civil War not broken out when it did.

Saeeda Islam:
Thank you for that Karl. My next question here is for Brianna: Can you please give us insight into the violence in ICE detention camps and past camps this country has constructed. What is the history of hiding these experiences, and can you also speak on COVID regulations in camps?

Brianna Nofil:

Yeah, absolutely. Detention has always been a fundamentally violent act, and it's not always violent in ways that make headlines or ways that are flashy, but I think it often looks more like neglect or lack of access to care. And at its core it's always about the separation of people from family and from communities and you know I think that one of the things that's really clear and kind of the archival sources we do have about the history of detention is that people often speak of like a spiritual death in detention if not like a physical death. Like this idea that this system is just designed to force you to give up. I think that one reason that the violence is so, so maybe like empowered in these spaces is because of the fluidity with which detainees can be moved around the system. Like we said before right? Because ICE and its predecessors have this kind of vast network of different sites. Some of which are prisons and some of which are detention sites and some of which are like the hampton inn that gave them a good rate, right? They're able to move people when people cause problems and I just cannot tell you how many times you see, like throughout history like you know there's a skirmish with a guard or the detainee starts circulating a petition or a lawyer starts asking questions. And then the next day the detainees are in five different states. And so I think that kind of this this flexibility the immigration services had to move people has really you know been both a tool to kind of reduce the visibility of what's happening in these sites. And I also think it's been like what these immigrants very much recognize it which is an intentional means of of thwarting organizing and forwarding resistance that's coming from within these sites. And of course there's very few legal protections for detainees who are being transferred through the system. We know their lawyers often aren't alerted. We know their families often can't locate them. So I think these transfers are you know just one of many factors that are enabling the type of violence we see. Yeah, and I guess I would also note that you know we're asking all these questions right now about kind of the moral and ethical validity of these sites or how we defend this. And I think it's important to remember too that people have been people have been asking questions about if this is moral or legal for like 100 years. And I think people often have really troubling takeaways when they think about the validity of detention. Like I think there's often a rhetoric that like some people deserve to be incarcerated but not not immigrants. Immigrants don't deserve that. So but even despite these like, maybe they're not people aren't always coming to the conclusions we want them to, but I do think it's important that we are not the we're not the first era to ask if this is if this is okay.

Saeeda: Yeah, I do have a follow-up question, Brianna. Recently has been exposed that forced hysterectomies it occurred in an ICE facility. This act of sexual oppression, gendered violence and by undefinition, genocide. We only know about this because of a whistleblower. Could you speak towards this?

Brianna: Yeah, yeah, thank you for bringing that up. The of course the first hysterectomy of these news is just like it's horrifying. And it reflects a much deeper history of of reproductive control and injustice that is particularly focused against women of color and institutionalized

people. Yeah, and it deserves a full investigation. I guess the thing that I'm really thinking about which is kind of cycling back to your your question about COVID too is that you know the report and like the whistleblower report about what happened here right? The hysterectomies were just one part of this much longer report about medical neglect in detention and about you know like how COVID has just absolutely ravished these centers and how many kind of deaths there have been because of lack of access to medical care. And so I guess it just makes me think about kind of where we put our attention all of these things and all of the just kind of like more mundane ways that detention enacts violence. And it makes me think about Mae's point about how you know just caps on immigration have just become normal. Like it's hard to imagine the U.S. without an immigration cap. I think that's kind of like what this kind of just mundane violence has sometimes become with the detention centers. Like there's these moments of explosive, shocking allegations, but then there's just kind of this like this dim or this hum of perpetual injustice that I think it's really hard to get people to pay attention to, but is a really big part of the problem. And so I think that's kind of and open question for me, is how do we, how do we spur attention not just about the most shocking allegations, but just the day-to-day atrocities that happen as well.

Pablo: May I answer please?

Saeeda: Thank you. Yes, please do.

Pablo: I mean I think I agree completely that violence is inherent to the system right? As Brianna was saying. And obviously that these allegations about abuses against women have to be investigated, right? But don't you think that there's something that is particular of this moment in which the violence is not just something that ICE and the government is trying to hide, but it's also something it's using, at least Trump is using as a way to show his strength as a leader and and his willingness to go to any you know lengths to stop migration right? So in a perverse way, that violence against immigrants is is is also propaganda, right? For for the need to you know, you know stronger enforcement, more border patrol, and I always think about the this sheriff Arpaio, right? Who built a career out of you know selling at the local level that kind of tough you know immigration attitude, no? So it's it's, I agree. I mean it's very difficult to call attention to these things, but I and it's necessary to do it, right? I mean to, but at the same time we have a government now who that is calling attention to it in a way as part of his threatening.

Emma: Thank you.

Karl: Can I add one point too?

Emma: Yeah, go ahead.

Saeeda: Yes, please do.

Karl: We haven't talked much about the border wall. I guess maybe that's my fault because I, Saeeda did ask me a question that sort of pointed in that direction, but one other thing just to think about and another layer to this discussion about violence is that you know this is one of the biggest infrastructure projects in the U.S. has ever undertaken. So far we've dedicated about 20 billion dollars, 20 billion dollars to it. That's just to construct it, not to deal with the maintenance which will be billions and billions more. And so we just think about what one could be doing with all of that sorts of money, rather than putting it in this frankly rather useless sort of monument to xenophobia and racism along the border. I think that's one other dimension to the violence. I was thinking a little bit when Brianna was talking about and Pablo's comment too which I think really pointed out the ways that this violence is both hidden and not hidden. I think we've allowed, or a lot of us allow ourselves not to focus on it. And I do think also you know it's interesting that Trump wants to get this out both to his own base and I think to send a message to possible immigrants in Central America, Latin America that don't come because we might rip up your family and lose your kids. And so there's these multiple layers of violence that are here but I do think even just the, where you're deciding to put your resources is part of that story.

Saeeda: Thank you, absolutely. Yeah, thank you. We have one question here from youtube that I'm going to ask and anyone can feel free to answer it. How much of a role do U.S. tv and hollywood media productions contribute to the proliferation and socialization in xenophobic ideas and how does that compare with media productions within other countries? Does anybody want to? Yeah, we can come back to it later too. Yeah, well.

Karl: Well I can take it first. I mean I, I feel like, and this has been, we're at this moment where if you think about Hollywood in particular where there's been a lot of attention to representation of African Americans in the movies. I think the discussion on Latinos is much farther behind and I think that the roles seem to be incredibly stereotypical whenever you're looking for a bad guy, the Mexican drug dealer is always the person. I mean there are these narco novella and telanovelas like "el reino de sur" (?) that look at, that are Mexican that are sort of, but they always humanize the drug dealers in a way that you never get in the U.S. media. And so it's a little bit of an echo chamber where I think we have a political discourse that already does this and then I think our cultural discourse tends to do this as well. And it's, I want there to be a moratorium on the Mexican drug dealer character, like I just don't want them in anymore movies for a good ten years so that we can begin to just put these to rest.

Pablo: Netflix would go broke. That's like the whole genre.

Karl: Yeah.

Emma: Well, another question for Karl. But this one's prewritten. In your recent LA Times op-ed you talk about how CBP or the border patrol's jurisdiction is in the first 100 miles around the border, where there's a relaxation of political rights and laws. However, this distinction is eroding. CBP has been at BLM pro, sorry Black Lives Matter protests or for example in Portland. So why is this bad and alarming? What happens when border law comes inland? What does this say about border law to begin with?

Karl: Sure. In some ways this build I think on what Brianna was talking about earlier, that there's a very long standing situation. So the border patrol was created in 1924. So we've more or less been living with this for a century. And there's always been a sort of mission creep on the part of the border patrol which is to say it's always been a little unclear where the border ends and where the quote unquote homeland begins, where the border patrol in some ways isn't supposed to intrude. And if you look at the historical record, the border patrol has always tried to sort of ooze more and more into the center. Just it's easier actually to have strategic checkpoints in the interior rather than to actually right be at the boundary line itself. And so in '46, congress passes a law in response to the fact that the border patrol is kind of going wherever they want and they say that they have to be a quote un-quote reasonable distance from the border. And then in 1953, the Department of Justice with no public debate chooses a hundred a hundred miles as a reasonable distance. And this hundred miles doesn't just mean the U.S. Mexico border and the U.S. Canada border. It also means the maritime boundaries. So that actually here in New York City, we are within this hundred mile zone and in fact because most of the large cities are either on the border or on the the coast, about two thirds of Americans, 200 million Americans, the majority of Americans actually live with this border zone. And in this border zone, the border patrol or the it's it's sort of successor, the customs and border protection doesn't have to follow all the fourth amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure. So this we saw this in Portland when they were you know when you saw that CBP was grabbing people off the street without warrants and people were outraged what's going on, but this was, they were saying we don't need a warrant. We don't have to act in this way. And within 25 miles of the border, they CBP can actually come onto private land without a warrant, so they can go wherever they want. They can't go into your house, but they can come onto your private land. So I think that this distinction is really invidious. I think any erosion of constitutional rights is a real problem and we never had a debate in 1953, so I think we actually need to have this debate now. And then I think the the the mission creep is still there so that recently, for instance CBP drones were flying over Minneapolis, St. Paul during some of the Black Lives Matter protests. That's 250 miles from the border. There's no legal basis for them to be doing that at all, but there seemingly so far been no consequences for them exceeding what they're supposed to be doing. So I think we have created, and the last point I want to make here is that CBP is now the largest law

enforcement agency in the country. It's got about 60,000 personnel. And so we've created this out of sight out of mind, created this very large sort of monster that we have very little oversight over and it can be applied. We should care because of what has been happening along the border, but if you don't care for that reason, it can potentially be applied against all of us and we should be very worried about civil liberties. I think to sort of point to the debate today, I mean if there's protests about Trump not stepping down, I think that CBP will be sort of one of his super police forces that he will use to try to put down unrest around the elections if something like that happens. That's kind of my nightmare scenario and why I think these border issues matter for everyone.

Mae: Can I add something to that? I mean, in a perverse way you could say that the definition of the border at 100 miles was a reform because before they had complete run of the country, right? And so, and so, and in the past we didn't have a distinction between border patrol and immigration officers, right? I mean they can go anywhere, and so this was used in particular against Chinese regardless of where they were in the country. And they defined crossing the border as an ongoing act, an ongoing offense. So it's not just when you cross a line, but it's until you reach your interior destination, wherever that might be. So that's why, that's one of the reasons why unlawful entry has no statute of limitation because it's considered a so-called ongoing offense. Like everyday you wake up and you're still breaking the law, that's their, that's their logic. But before, I think part of the reason for the pushback and the call for defining a border zone was because they were running amok all over the country against Chinese absolutely, but also increasingly against Europeans. And they used it against labor radicals who are immigrants, et cetera, et cetera. So I agree with what you're saying about the dangers of this, but I also want to point out that what they're doing now is actually going back to what they used to do.

Karl: Yeah, no that's a great point, thank you.

Emma: Saeeda?

Saeeda: I'm here. Emma, did you want me to ask the next question?

Emma: Yes.

Saeeda: Okay.

Emma: It was listed as that, but I can. Well we have a question that was submitted, but it's actually pretty similar or related to a question we also have pre-written, so we can just pose both questions at the same time. And Brianna, you're most qualified to respond to this one. So this

one's directed towards you. From Facebook, someone asked can you can you discuss the children in the detention centers. There are alarming amount of articles about how they're lost to the system, how parents lose track and some get adopted. There's also a lot of speculation of reports of these children lost potentially being put into sex trafficking. If you can speak to that, but related to that we also we're just wondering like what when a child and a parent are separated at the border by ICE, what happens?

Brianna: Yeah, yeah. So I think that like part of the answer to this question is there there's a lot we don't know right now and I think there's a lot we probably won't know for years. But kind of generally speaking it might be helpful to to remember that like kind of how the border looks right now is is different than how it looked two years ago. Right now the majority of families who are crossing the border are being deported or returned to Mexico before they're reaching detention and this is in part because the current administration has used the pandemic kind of as an excuse to turn away asylum seekers. And we also know right that family separation was formally ended and of course not really ended in practice. And the reason it hasn't really ended in practice right are those legal loopholes that still exist. So if a parent has a criminal record regardless of how small the offenses are or if someone comes with a grandparent or a cousin they can still be separated from their family member. But we do have a sense that you know it's it's not what it was in 2018. So for children who are separated, the kind of general process is that they are held in a facility sometimes called a shelter or a detention site and then the office of refugee resettlement, so a separate office from ICE, attempts to locate family in the U.S. and so what we saw in 2018 was that the office of refugee resettlement becomes just radically overstretched. They do not have the shelter space for this many children, and that's why you know a large part of why we see these shelters that look like someone put them up like overnight. So the big concern here and like how we get to this question of our young people being exploited ties to the question of how is the ORR vetting the people it's releasing minors to. And so there's been yeah questions about labor trafficking, there has been also just concerns about you know there's lots of religiously affiliated foster groups that are that have taken in migrant children. And you know some of these are questions about exploitation, other others are just questions about like do these foster parents have the resources to deal with children who have been through this kind of trauma. And so yeah, there's dozens of legal actions pending right now. Most of them are torts about what children have experience in this, in this few year period. And I think I think this is going to be, it'll be something that we will learn more about as it goes on.

Saeeda: Thank you, Brianna.

Emma: We're going to try to wrap up. We're only going to do a few more questions.

Saeeda: Our next question is for Pablo. Could you speak on economic and demographic changes in the last decades, especially since the 1990s?

Emma: Perhaps how it pertains to forced migration.

Saeeda: Yeah.

Pablo: Migration, yeah. Well, in very general terms we see the Mexican population grew very fast in the, in the second half of the 20th century. So by the 70s, 80s you have a big size of youth cohort in Mexico that you know many many people moved to the U.S. We also have a several economic crisis that push people to seek work in the U.S. in the 80s and then again in the in the 90s. That was very clear. Those push factors are not the only ones that count. I mean, we all we should consider the existence of networks of people who already lived in the U.S. and facilitated the the migration of people from Mexico to the U.S. whereas especially again since the 80s and 90s. But the the big change that we see in the flow of Mexican migrants to the U.S. is the shift from seasonal or cyclical movement of migrants who used to come to work in a hardware store or a you know specific sector of the U.S. economy. And they go back to Mexico into a more permanent migration. And the main cause for that are the migration policies that the U.S. established you know under Clinton mainly where the crossing into the U.S. became more difficult because of enforcement and as a result the cost of of of the crossing also went up in the fight in a sense that if you hire somebody to help you go across the border you had to pay more. And you had an additional risk. If you went back to Mexico, you didn't know if you could come back next season, right? So the result is that the the number of Mexican migrants detained in the border has been dropping. The the Mexican population in the U.S. which is about 11 million is very stable, it is not, because these people who will have a big difficulty in going back to Mexico and returning, no? And that I think has changed the shape and of of Mexican migration in a in a very important way. I would add to you know what Mae was saying. If you look at the number of people detained at the border, the number of Mexicans has been dropping and the number of Central Americans has been increasing. That's a big you know kind of change in the recent migration that we see know and it's something that you know if it was difficult for Mexicans to cross into the U.S. you can imagine how difficult it is from someone from Honduras or or or El Salvador to cross Mexico, and then get into the U.S. It's the cost is very high and the danger is very high so I don't know if I answered the question, but I guess going back to the initial question, I would say that economic factors are important, but the two economies have been integrating for a while. And there are other variables, other you know man made problems that have changed the way in which migration works.

Mae: I would just, I would just add to that, that another factor in, is the changes in the American economy and the structure of the economy as we have a more, you know that what people refer

to as the shrinking of the middle class or the de-industrialization, drop in manufacturing jobs, but you have an increase in service jobs. Jobs in restaurants, gardening, construction, et cetera, et cetera. And those are low wage jobs for the most part, so that's also a post. The growth of those sectors has also encouraged our integration.

Emma: Thank you. We are gonna wrap up, we just have one more question directed towards Mae. This is kind of a multi-pronged question because we have one from the zoom chat, but it is also relevant to our pre-written closing question. So how have diseases and pandemics impacted U.S. immigration at other points in the past. Have there been similar moments, sorry, have there been other moments similar to our current moment where COVID-19 and with COVID-19 where U.S. citizens traveling abroad or emigrating has been so restricted?

Mae: Right, that's a great question. I would say first that I think it's historically a pattern in epidemics that people look for an outsider to blame. In the Middle Ages, people blame Jews for the Bubonic Plague, Chinese were blamed for the plague in the late 19th and early 20th century. So it's, I don't want to say it's a human response because it's a social response, but there is I think this kind of go to reaction to blame outsiders, right? Which is a very bad response because it's the germ that travels or the disease that travels, not an ethnic group, nationality, or race that travels. The example that comes to my mind immediately is the instance of the Bubonic Plague in 1900 and 1901. Firsts in Hawaii, where they burned Hawaii Chinatown to the ground to try to control it. And then San Francisco where they quarantined all of Chinatown. They quarantined it in a really racist way which is that they drew the quarantine line so that it kind of accepted houses that white people lived in so they had the zigzag quarantine line so that if you were white but you lived on the border you were outside the zone, but all the Chinese were inside the zone. But they wouldn't let people leave for anything. And of course it was a huge race racist backlash against against Chinese. A few years later there was another instance of plague in San Francisco and it hit mostly white people, not Chinese, and they didn't use the same kind of brutal measures against them.

Emma: Thank you.

Karl: Can I just add to that that one of the things that I find really significant, well is how early on the U.S. Mexico border has been cast as a medicalized border as a sort of supposed to be protecting you from these foreign invaders of which in ways Mae was talking about end up being cast as germs as well. So in El Paso for instance, early on they have all these policies about delousing and and the idea that Mexican immigrants are going to bring diseases into the United States. It's actually a little bit ironic because during the "unclear" they actually had a better sort of public health system in Mexico than they did in much of the United States during this time period. But it's a very, in the ways that Mae was saying, it's a very old trope and then it gets

applied to a lot of these policies along the border so that we now have this this groove that we think about the border is supposed to be protecting us from all sorts of outside threats, one of which is supposedly germs and illnesses.

Emma: It reminds me of the irony of when the Europeans came to Turtle Island or the original United States when the indigenous people were here and they brought so much disease. Right, yeah yes. Great, well this was a wonderful really really informative and productive panel. I'm going to turn it to Saeeda to close it up for us.

Saeeda: We'd like to thank all of our panelists for joining us for our yet another very insightful conversation. We are actually planning a part two to this panel. It was birthed at our last meeting. And we all were sort of talking about just action, right? Because oftentimes we ask ourselves well I've consumed all this knowledge but what do what can I do or you know can I make a difference. And the answer is yes. Everyone can do their part and make a difference. Our next panel is going to be about the activism work around immigration reform and detention centers. And a lot of Columbia professors and students are doing some amazing work and we'll hopefully get to showcase all of the work that they're doing and how everyone can get involved next month. So please stay tuned for that. And we'd like to again thank all of our panelists for joining us and have a good night everyone.

Mae: And thank Emma and Saeeda so much for organizing and moderating.

Pablo: Yeah, great job. Thank you.

Mae: And the department, thank you.

Karl: Thanks to the department. Thanks everyone for tuning in. Take care.

Brianna: Good night everyone.

Saeeda: Goodnight.

Pablo: Thank you, Emma.

Emma: Oh, thank you, Pablo. Bye. Oh did you have a question?

Pablo: Sorry about the dog at the beginning.

Emma: Oh no worries. I, I love pets. My cat is sleeping on this chair.

Pablo: He’s sleeping, that’s a good thing.

Emma: Yeah, she often comes up on this. So I was, there was the chance that that was going to be me too. All good, thank you so much.

Pablo: Sure, ok thank you.