

¡Ya Basta!

The Trump Paradox and Chicanx/Mesoamerican Counternarratives

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ABSTRACT: *This essay seeks to systematically dismantle Trump’s narrative on trade with and migration from Mexico and explain how his racialized policy approach distorts ethno-demographic complementarities and cross-border interdependencies between the United States and Mesoamerica. The origin of the Trump narrative in white supremacy discourses is contrasted with the evolution of the Chicanx studies paradigm, which is uniquely positioned to dismantle this narrative and reconstruct a counternarrative in the post-Trump era. The “Trump Paradox” is uncovered through a geographic analysis of Trump voting and anti-trade and anti-immigrant attitudes, which are shown to be negatively correlated with actual local exposure to Mexican trade and immigration. The California Chicanx experience of Proposition 187 provides lessons for a post-Trump unraveling of the Trump Paradox. A Chicanx “praxis of decolonization” can excavate the root causes of racialized inequalities within and between the United States and Mesoamerica and reconstruct an inclusive future of more equitable and sustainable transnational approaches to trade, migration, and remittance restructuring.*

From the planning of his 2016 presidential campaign to the framing of his 2020 reelection bid, Donald Trump focused relentlessly on a victimization narrative, blaming foreign trade and migration, particularly from Mexico, for what ails America. His narrative, which called for raising protectionist tariffs, attacking immigrants, and building a “great wall,” was initially underestimated by many media and political figures, who failed to anticipate both the terror it could unleash on the Chicanx population and its potential to galvanize a large segment of the white electorate. Chicanx studies scholars, on the other hand, pointed out early in Trump’s campaign that

existing research showed his diagnosis to be false and his proposals self-destructive for the nation (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2016). They warned that he was echoing a familiar narrative that had for centuries been used to vilify the “Brown other” and justify projects of conquest, domination, colonization, exploitation, and discrimination (Montejano 2021; Santa Ana 2002). The societal failure to immediately counter the economic absurdity and blatant bigotry of Trump’s anti-Mexican position allowed the mogul to repeat his false claims about the impact of Mexican trade and migration and broaden his nativist argument throughout his political rise. While deeply offensive and hate-inducing, Trump’s lies nevertheless provided a public service by making explicit the white nativist, neonationalist, and explicitly racialized narrative that has long existed under the surface of popular, policy, and academic discourses. The chaotic consequences of his approach to migration and trade policy inflicted damage on Latinx communities as well as—paradoxically—on those of his white supporters, demonstrating the mendacity and cruelty of his racialized worldview.

This essay seeks to systematically dismantle Trump’s false narrative and construct an evidence-based explanation for how long-term ethno-demographic complementarities and cross-border interdependencies were distorted by Trump’s fundamentally flawed policy approaches. An alternative Chicax perspective can—as James Baldwin once said of Black writers—“excavate the real history of this country [and] tell the truth till we can no longer bear it” (Glaude 2020). Such a perspective can address the root causes of unequal trade and migration relations between the United States and Mesoamerica (Mexico and Central America). It can also construct, through a “praxis of decolonization” (Mignolo and Walsh 2018), the basis for more equitable and sustainable transnational approaches to the reform and restructuring of immigration and trade.

We begin by analyzing the rise of the Trump narrative as rooted in a long history of US white supremacy discourses. This is then contrasted to the historical formation of the Chicax paradigm, which emerged as a critique and redefinition of white-centric, racialized national narratives.

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Geo-economic, voting, and political survey data are used to interrogate the Trump narrative. In the process, we uncover the existence of a “Trump Paradox,” whereby counties and congressional districts that voted for Trump in 2016 and 2020 are shown to have the most negative attitudes about Mexican immigration and trade while actually having the least exposure to Mexican immigration and trade (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Telles 2021a, 2021b). When compared with national averages, regions of the country with the highest exposure to Mexican immigration and trade—such as California and many urban areas around the country, even manufacturing centers such as Detroit—were both *less likely* to vote for Trump and *less likely* to have negative attitudes about trade and migration. The current Trump Paradox invites reflections on the California-Chicanx roadmap of twenty-five years ago, which can serve as a cautionary tale and an inspiration for dismantling the self-destructive Trump narrative of “white victimization.”

The false narrative underlying the Trump Paradox also highlights the need for an evidence-based reconstruction of the actual inequalities and the potential benefits to the United States and Mesoamerica of ethno-demographic complementarities and cross-border interdependencies. Today’s unequal distribution of national and transnational benefits is rooted in the historically distorted patterns of labor rights within and between the United States and Mexico in the decades since World War II. A review of trade and migration policies, beginning with the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, reveals that immigration policies became more restrictive during a period of trade liberalization between countries. Failure to understand and transform the un-equalizing policy mix of trade liberalization coupled with migration restrictions allowed for a falsely constructed racialization of the effects of trade and migration by both the left and the right. This then gave rise to a platform of white nationalist, and paradoxically self-defeating, rhetoric in the Trump era.

Finally, Chicanx-inspired transnational modeling is used to analyze costs and benefits under alternative scenarios of trade and migration policies: that is, anti-trade and anti-migration policies versus the implementation of immigration reform and a trade and development agenda that includes transnational remittance empowerment and the North American Development Bank (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Robinson 2020; Hinojosa et al. 2021; Hinojosa-Ojeda and Telles 2021a). In conclusion, a Chicanx/Latinx-based transnational analysis reveals new structural shifts in US-Mesoamerican demographic and production complementarities. This data-driven understanding can allow for an inclusive vision of

twenty-first-century cooperation between multiracial democracies in developed and developing countries, one based on Chicana transnationally rooted scenarios for cross-border sustainable development within the emerging global “great convergence” (Ogden 2019).

The Evolution of White Supremacy Narratives

The political rise of Donald Trump took many by surprise, but his neonativist narrative is rooted in a long historical evolution of white supremacy discourse. Trump reanimated this discourse by reframing white privilege and white grievance as a justified defense against a perceived attack by nonwhite forces. According to his argument, this attack on the supremacy of “our great American way of life” requires an aggressive counterattack if America is to re-create a supposedly idyllic past.

Throughout US history, the foundational discourses of white hierarchical supremacy have been used to legitimize continental expansionist projects and the structures and institutions of unequal power. Such discourses dehumanized people of color in order to justify Anglo-Saxon colonization, genocide of the Native population, race-based slavery, the Indian Removal Act of 1830, “Manifest Destiny” and US expansionism, and the annexation of northern Mexico after the US-Mexican War of conquest (Almaguer 1994; Horsman 1981). Although the Declaration of Independence proclaims that “all men are created equal,” embedded in the US Constitution is a series of institutional and regional power disparities that operate through mechanisms such as the Electoral College, which undercut suffrage and fortified slavery. Combined with the violation of human rights in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, these allowed for racialized patterns of economic and political domination through white settler expansionism (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014; Hinojosa-Ojeda 1998). From the end of Reconstruction, the rise of Jim Crow, and the creation of the southwest border, such first-wave discourses established the foundation for the construction of a multigenerational “possessive investment in whiteness” (Lipsitz 2006).

In the twentieth century, the ideology of white dominance evolved to allow for the assimilation of newcomers into the hierarchy of cultural privilege that equated Americanness with whiteness. Whereas the first white supremacy narrative arose as a means to justify conquest and colonization, the second wave was built on a new discourse that emphasized the need for all immigrants and nonwhites to assimilate to a white Anglo-Saxon

Protestant model. Rooted in the nativist racialization of turn-of-the-century immigration (Higham 1963), this assimilationist perspective gave rise to a midcentury consensus between cultural conservatives like scholars Allan Bloom and E. D. Hirsch and political liberals such as Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Theodore Schlesinger. This consensus rejected overt racism and endorsed the multicultural opening of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, which abolished the national origin quotas that had been used to bar Asians and restrict immigration of Eastern and Southern Europeans. Nevertheless, this assimilationist discourse centered the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant experience as the American ideal to which all groups could and should conform. Those espousing this liberal assimilationist model, however, also began attacking the so-called hyphenated American as being “not an American at all,” as Theodore Roosevelt famously declared in 1915. Growing ethno-racial diversity after 1965 began to challenge this second-wave discourse and became antithetical to the liberal assimilationist project.

Most recently, a third-wave white supremacy narrative featuring supposed “reverse discrimination” against whites has emerged amid the changing ethno-racial demography of the twenty-first century. Within conservative politics, the failure of second-wave assimilationism to guarantee white hegemony gave way to a discourse that blamed civil rights advances and, later, immigration and trade policies for the economic insecurity of white working-class Americans. In the 1960s, white backlash against the Black civil rights movement allowed Richard Nixon and the Republican Party to deploy a “Southern strategy” that resulted in a massive political realignment of the once-unified Dixie Democrats. Subsequent decades saw the expansion of this strategy to include anti-trade and anti-immigration nationalism. Attacks on Latinx immigrants, particularly Mexicans, became the new race-baiting strategy. A central question now is whether Trumpism will be able to use the white nationalist narrative, reformulated in opposition to Mexican immigration and trade, as a basis to mobilize a sustainable political coalition for the twenty-first century.

Samuel Huntington, presidential adviser and political scientist, articulated this new white victim narrative in warning of a “Hispanic threat” and what he famously saw as a global “clash of civilizations” (2004). Huntington attacked the liberal assimilationist model and used the Chicanx experience as evidence of its failure—a theme echoed by political commentators such as Peter Skerry and Ann Coulter (2015), among others. As Huntington explained:

The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Latinos have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American dream. The United States ignores this challenge at its peril. (2009, 1)

The anti-immigrant ethos of third-wave white supremacy builds on these ideas. It is deeply rooted in the historical expansionist project of Anglo-American exceptionalism, from English colonialism in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, to Andrew Jackson's political mobilization of the "common [read, *white*] man," to the US-Mexican War and "big stick" imperialism in Latin America, to the Cold War fought in Cuba and Central America in the twentieth century. According to this narrative, the United States is the standard-bearer for a Western civilization that now needs to be rescued and expanded. Trump echoed the "clash of civilizations" theme in his Warsaw speech in 2017 (Lozada 2017), when he claimed that America needs to defend "our civilization" against "extremism" that threatens "the culture, faith and tradition that make us who we are." Throughout his campaign and presidency, he depicted Mexican migration and trade as undermining white America's legitimate position of domination within the United States and globally.

Trumpism also centered the ideas of immigration hardliner Stephen Miller and economic nationalist Steve Bannon (Anderson 2019; Green 2017), who used Huntington's narrative to build a political project around white nationalist identity. Bannon's economic nationalism blames NAFTA for shipping American jobs overseas while Mexican immigrants take American jobs at home. Miller's own youthful anti-Chicanx activism was influenced by Huntington's Hispanic "challenge," and he gravitated toward organizations founded by white nationalists who emphasized the criminality of immigrants, particularly those who are undocumented (Hayden 2019; Horowitz 2017). The Trump campaign attacked US-Mexico trade and migration as the core of their white victimization discourse, representing a "last stand" for the great Anglo-American colonizing project. Building on first- and second-wave precursors, Trump's third-wave white nationalism explicitly focused its attacks on the demographic, cultural, intellectual, and political trajectory of the Latinx transnational population. It depicted this population as an existential threat to white hegemonic power, a threat that must be defeated by any means necessary, including insurrection and

authoritarianism. While Trump himself is out of office, his worldview lives on in the white nationalist movement that he continues to foment and lead from his gilded Mar-a-Lago retreat.

The Rise and Evolution of the Chicana Paradigm

The rise of Trump highlights the historical challenge that, in many ways, has always been a fundamental motivation for Chicana studies: the imperative need for a force to counter the colonial, imperialist, and racially dominating Euro-origin project in greater North America. (For geographers, the continent of North America comprises the United States, Canada, Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean.) The historical reconstruction of the white supremacy narrative was the original and familiar focus of the Chicana critical examination and formation of a counternarrative rooted in the experience of the white racialized conquest of the Southwest and domination in US-Mexico relations. As the white supremacy narrative evolved over the past half century, Chicana studies went through its own historical evolution, dialectically challenging the shifting tenets of white supremacy. In the process, Chicana studies has matured into a critically decolonizing, multidisciplinary field that affirmatively engages in transnational theoretical construction, social mobilization, and policy making.

In contrast to the evolutionary arch of a white-centric worldview, the Chicana paradigm began nearly one hundred years ago as a cultural nationalist awakening and class critique of conquest and racial oppression. This gave rise in the 1960s to a second wave of systematic decolonization and empowerment of Chicana identity and the affirmation of transnational contributions to US society. Now, a third wave has defined a politically engaged and critical humanist agenda aimed at overcoming a wide range of racial, gender, and socioeconomic inequalities. In a counterhegemonic reversal, Chicana praxis authentically reconstructs the basis for a liberal democratic politics by advancing a fact-based, inclusive, and transnational policy approach. While white identity politics retreats to fantasies of reverse victimization to justify anti-democratic attempts to maintain privileged power, Chicana responses address the real challenges of building democratic US and Mesoamerican societies in a twenty-first-century multiracial and multicentered world.

Chicana scholarship was initially energized by the transnational intellectual precursors of the Mexican Revolution (Cockcroft 1968; Gómez-Quiñones 1971) and by the engaged progressive research of the 1920s and

1930s. This is classically represented by Manuel Gamio's anthropological writing, including his *Aspects of Mexican Civilization* (Vasconcelos and Gamio 1926) and his border-crossing fieldwork on the plight of Mexican workers in the United States (1930, 1931). Considered the father of Mexican anthropology, Gamio saw his seminal work extended by other Mexicans and Chicanos, such as educator and politician José Vasconcelos (1936), who wrote on issues of mestizo identity; the poet and diplomat Octavio Paz (1961), whose work included a study of US-Mexican "pachuco" identity; and Ernesto Galarza (1964), author of pioneering activist scholarship on the Bracero Program.

The second wave of modern Chicana studies was animated by movements to demand worker rights among immigrant farmworkers and basic civil rights among urban youth. This early period was characterized by the rediscovery of cultural pride and identity in the face of racial and national oppression. It also embodied an explicit critique of the white narrative underlying the conquest and settler colonization of "Aztlán," the US Southwest (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). Foundational teachings of activist leaders such as César Chávez, Dolores Huerta, and Rodolfo "Corky" Gonzales focused on discrimination and the fight to establish footholds in the labor rights and educational systems. The Chicano movement supported, for example, the youth activism of high school students in the 1968 Chicano "blowouts" in Los Angeles and of college students in the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO), formed in San Antonio in 1967. (MAYO later evolved into the Raza Unida Party.) CASA-HGT (Centro de Acción Social Autónomo—Hermandad General de Trabajadores) epitomized a more radical Marxist and anti-imperialist frame that emphasized immigrant, working-class, and cross-border struggles.

The original works of Chicana self-definition were characterized by intense debates on identity, sexuality, cultural nationalism, and transnational class analysis (Acuña 1972; Almaguer 1994; Gómez-Quiñones 1971; Gutiérrez 2006). Working in tandem with community activists, Chicana studies created new identities, using the critical methodology of educator Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968) to eliminate images of the "other" from the subaltern experience. A Southwest regional perspective invigorated the historical, political, and economic analysis of such activist scholars as Juan Gómez-Quiñones (1972) and Rodolfo Acuña (1971), who reexamined Chicana exploitation and consciously built the theoretical and practical capabilities for overcoming racialized class oppression.

Chicanx studies sought to burst open the doors of the academy, breaking down the disciplinary boundaries and methodological nationalisms that blocked a full, comprehensive explanation of the Chicanx reality. This critical exploration was seen as imperative for transcending the many borders created between nations, cultures, and gendered forms of oppression. Scholars and activists understood the need to support the self-empowerment of Chicanx communities both inside and outside the academy (Blackwell, Briggs, and Chiu 2015; Zepeda-Millán 2017). Chicanx exploration of the wide diversity of nationality, sexuality, and other intersectionalities, including through feminist and queer studies, is reflected in the ongoing intense debate about “Chicanx naming” (De Onís 2017).

Soon after its emergence from the Chicano movement, Chicanx studies became engaged in building national social policy organizations, and its scholarly focus shifted to include the growing economic contribution of the Latinx community. This opened the way for an analysis of how the coming ethno-racial transformation could be a major opportunity for the country rather than a threat (Carnoy, Daley, and Hinojosa-Ojeda 1993; Hayes-Bautista, Schink, and Chapa 1988). Simultaneously, the Chicanx community was coming under open attack. California’s Proposition 187 sought to prohibit undocumented residents from using public services, supposedly obtained at the expense of the white population; in its focus on false white grievances, it foreshadowed the Trump narrative. Indeed, Chicanx studies scholars were among the first to call for the development of “white studies” (Avila 2006) and for an analytic critique of self-defeating white-centric policy agendas. Chicanx scholars also developed advanced media and metaphoric studies to reveal how media and image manipulations were being used to promote a false “Latino threat narrative” (Chavez 2013; Santa Ana 2020). In many ways, these battles prepared Chicanx studies to critique both the rise of Trump’s narrative and his politics. They provided a roadmap for fighting back with social scientific and legal policy agendas as well as with strategies for political and electoral mobilization (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Schey 1996).

Today Chicanx studies is intentionally creating “decoloniality in/as praxis,” combining critical social science and humanities scholarship with the mobilization of societal and electoral power. Both scholarship and activism are necessary for the sustainable and equitable implementation of progressive policies within and across borders. This engaged bridging is exemplified in the recent Latinx “power shift” in California (Ayón and Pla 2018; Zepeda-Millán 2017), in which Chicanx studies scholars

participated in the critiques of Proposition 187 as well as in subsequent electoral redistricting and the crafting of inclusive policies (Bedolla 2014; Fraga et al. 2011). In post-demographic transition California, Chicana studies is leading in developing counterhegemonic discourses that speak for the new majorities and minorities (Pastor 2018) and that advance a new politics of creative inclusivity. Chicana perspectives in critical social science and humanities also focus on forging a new transborder consciousness across multiple intersectionalities, one that is brilliantly expressed by Gloria Anzaldúa in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987), among her other works.

The Chicana political trajectory is re-creating an authentic defense of democratic principles and human rights, of “American” rights, precisely because they have been denied, won back, and then used for Latinxs’ overall advancement. Based on the cross-border Chicana lived experience, Chicana studies also calls for transforming vicious cycles of transnational relations. This shift from vicious to virtuous relations has become the hallmark of Chicana policy innovation, from the creation of the North American Development Bank (NADB) (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2021) to the advocacy of Julián and Joaquin Castro for a Marshall Plan for Central America (Pilkington 2019).

Trumpism’s focus on an anti-Latina narrative represents a historic opportunity for a Chicana transnational counternarrative. Boldly questioning dominant discourses, Chicana studies must empirically and theoretically refute Trumpist assertions. Using quantitative analytical tools, we can now dismantle a false narrative from the point of view of the lived experience of a transnational people in order to allow for the construction of more inclusive and sustainable alternative policy frameworks.

Contra-Trump: Chicana Narrative Dismantlement and Counternarrative Reconstruction

In his political rise, Donald Trump utilized a narrative that pinpointed Mexico, and later Central America, as the source of the United States’ problems, and he called for anti-immigrant and anti-trade policies to “make America great again.” Central to his argument was that trade, migration, and remittances have had negative impacts on his (mostly white) supporters. Arguing that trade sends US jobs to Mexico, Mexican migration brings drugs and crime to the United States, and remittances to Mexico drain our economy, Trump claimed that the American Dream is dead and that he

(and only he) could bring it back. He promised to do so through a series of restrictive measures—ending NAFTA, building a border wall, taxing remittances—that he said would benefit his constituencies and restore America’s greatness by reversing the damage Mexico has done.

The Trump narrative, which continues to animate Trumpism as an enduring political force, outlines a series of testable assertions that together compose the white victim argument. It posits that (a) cross-border flows are leading to specific negative consequences for white Americans and destroying the American Dream, and that (b) these flows must be countered by specific anti-trade and anti-immigration policies, which (d) will produce specific benefits that collectively put “America first” and “make America great again.” Implicit is a narrative of external attack on the privileged position of native (read, *white*) Americans, which can be addressed only by the offensive and defensive actions of an aggressively nationalist state using policies of control exercised at national borders.

Specifically, the Trump narrative claims that America ceased being great because illegal immigrants (“rapists” and “murderers”) bring crime and drug use to vulnerable Americans (read, *white nonimmigrants*), while trade agreements take US jobs (“Mexico has our jobs”). Migration is characterized as a territorial invasion, inciting a fear-based racism centered on the notion that “real” Americans are rapidly becoming a demographic minority. Foreigners are described as taking advantage of hard-working Americans who have been sold out by governing elites. The narrative casts Mexicans and Mexico as the main culprits behind declining incomes in many areas of the country (Coulter 2015). Using a mercantilist view of trade, imports are seen as displacing US production, “taking” jobs, and channeling investment abroad. NAFTA is “the worst trade deal ever made.” Remittances, similarly, are depicted as a drain on the US economy that should be “seized” in order to “build a great wall . . . and have Mexico pay for that wall.”

The narrative is designed to cause fear, one of the most powerful basic responses instigated by the primitive “reptilian” part of the human brain. This fear is then weaponized politically against the foreign “other” (Woodward 2018). Notice the zero-sum, almost hydraulic logic by which an imagined attack justifies an aggressive defense of US privilege. In particular, flows of people and goods across borders are seen as causing harmful displacement that can only be addressed with maximal protective force. Trump’s nativist pitch became the basis for extreme policy recommendations. On immigration, the solution was—and remains—the building of a great wall to keep Mexicans out. Mexico will pay for the wall through

various imposed punitive methods, such as “seizing remittances” (read, *reparations for damage done*). On trade, the solution is the threat of huge protectionist tariffs to force new trade agreements that return “our” jobs. Together these measures will enable the United States to secure its borders and sovereignty and become great again.

It is important to take seriously Trump’s masterful use of “framing, metaphorical thought, and emotion” for mining the “cognitive unconscious” (Lakoff 2014). His rhetoric is designed to generate primordial fear of the “other” attacking our safety. This he accomplishes through a racialized construction of the “dark” intruding outsider and depictions of a violent assault by Mexico on legitimate white privileges, an ironic inversion of the actual historical dispossession of Mexicans by the United States. The narrative is told from the point of view of the native-born American whose white supremacy is under attack from foreigners and who is left unprotected by traitorous US governing elites (Woodward 2018). In a desperate effort to invoke an existential threat, Trump promotes his wall at rallies by warning that “without borders, we do not have a country.” David Schanzer (2019), of Duke University’s Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, points out that this claim was echoed in a manifesto by the gunman who carried out a mass shooting at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, in 2019.

The power of this simply constructed yet fictitious cross-border narrative should not have been underestimated, especially given Trump’s dangerously overt racist demonizing, which has no precedent in modern presidential campaigns. Trumpism appeals to white ethnic identity politics and nostalgia, which are grounded in the historical legacy of US white supremacy and fueled by the challenge to that supremacy embodied in the current demographic transition to a multiracial America. Trump’s claim that “this is our last chance” was a desperate call intended to create a white backlash that he could ride to the presidency. It should have clarified the crisis: that American democracy was at stake.

Trump’s nativist and racialized worldview, however, also presents an opportunity. How do we turn resisting, dismantling, and replacing the Trump narrative into a teachable moment in American history? A careful Chicana-focused analysis reveals a series of dubious and false assertions concerning the negative and positive effects of Mexican migration and trade. Analyzing these assertions of causality allows us to test the real material impacts of migration and trade on the lives of Trump supporters and to judge whether the restrictive migration and trade policies he promotes can address the real challenges facing the country.

The Chicanx paradigm and Chicanx lived experience together provide a powerful tool for systematically dismantling the false Trump narrative and constructing an alternative. Below I present three analytical, data-based investigations designed as a critical refutation and reformulation of the former president's arguments on trade, migration, and remittances. I begin by examining the Trump Paradox in terms of the geo-economic characteristics, attitudes, and voting patterns of his supporters. Next I undertake a fact-based political economy analysis of the actual racial winners and losers in US-Mexico-Central American integration. Finally, I present an economy-wide modeling of the likely effects of Trump's anti-trade, anti-migration policies and contrast these to an alternative policy agenda aimed at equitable regional integration and development.

The Trump Paradox, and Lessons from California

After the 2016 election, journalists, political leaders, and academics seeking to explain Trump's political rise promoted the notion that his election and the popularity of his opinions constituted real evidence that immigration and trade threatened American workers. In particular, pundits endorsed the idea that Trump's appeal had a material basis for those left behind by the economic recovery after the Great Recession. This economic privation, they wrongly argued, resulted in Trump's electoral victory in key swing states and the national Electoral College vote (Davis and Hilsenrath 2016).

Scholars debated the causes of Trump's unexpected victory using a variety of techniques. Some analyzed data on imports, drawing a connection between the "shock" of increased Chinese imports in the early 2000s and voting for Trump in 2016 (Autor et al. 2016). These scholars noted that Chinese import penetration was also found to be a predictor of the rise of nationalism and right-wing candidates in Europe (Colantone and Stanig 2018). Others pointed to the decline in manufacturing employment in counties that voted for Trump (Altik, Atkeson, and Hansen 2018). Much was made of these early economic studies, even though the economic impacts of trade and migration from Mexico were never specifically considered.

Rather than focus on material impacts, social scientists initially looked at voter attitudes. A 2018 paper published by the National Academy of Sciences argued that a perception of white status threat explained Trump's victory (Mutz 2018). Candidate Trump was able to tap into white anxiety about globalization and diversity, and concerns about immigration and

job displacement predicted greater support for him. Marc Hooghe and Ruth Dassonneville (2018) found that anti-immigrant attitudes and racial resentments explained much of the Trump vote. Others countered that the status threat explanation was overstated and that “perceptions of economic interests” were at least as important, although perceived economic interests are intertwined with status issues (Morgan and Lee 2018). None of these studies explored actual levels and impacts of immigration or trade in Trump areas, let alone Mexican immigration or trade.

During the primary season of 2016, the North American Integration and Development (NAID) Center at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) launched the Trump Paradox project. We sought to document the disconnect between the Trump narrative, especially as it pertains to Mexicans and Mexico, and a Chicana-rooted perspective (Hinojosa-Ojeda, Wynn, and Chen 2016). In both the 2016 and 2020 elections, we found a paradox, both nationally and with respect to California specifically. That is, while Trump blamed Mexican migration and trade for his supporters’ economic woes, our analysis at the national and local levels (counties, commuter zones, and congressional districts) revealed that *the regions most favoring Trump actually have the least exposure to Mexican migration and imports* (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Telles 2021a, 2021b). Moreover, we found a contradiction between the perceived economic and social impacts of Mexican trade and immigration, on one hand, and their actual impacts, on the other. Our findings challenge the most common economic and attitudinal explanations for Trump support.

Detailed regression analysis reveals the false narrative around migration, trade, and remittances that rallied (and continues to rally) Trump supporters. Their attitudes against immigration and trade are not supported by any material evidence that immigration and trade have had negative economic impacts on the counties that supported Trump in 2016 and 2020. While negative attitudes concerning immigration and trade are highly correlated with electoral support for Trump, actual exposure to immigration and trade is in fact unrelated either to negative attitudes toward trade and migration or to electoral support for Trump.

This data does, however, confirm that the counties that voted for Trump are, in general, more economically challenged by unemployment and poverty than others. Trump enjoyed high levels of support in regions that are struggling economically, with high concentrations of white poverty, high unemployment rates, and a low median income. In counties that supported Trump over a Democratic candidate, the average poverty rate is

15 percent. Trump voters are concentrated in counties where many whites have only a high school degree or less and where large majorities of people living in poverty are white. Economically challenged counties with larger nonwhite populations did not, by and large, vote for Trump.

Depressed economic conditions in Trump-voting regions, however, are unrelated to exposure to Mexican trade and immigration, and so it is logical to conclude that attacking Mexico and Mexicans is not the solution to their problems. Trump nevertheless continued to double down on his narrative during the 2018 and 2020 elections. This led to an unraveling of his support in areas more exposed to trade and migration and a deepening of his paradoxical support in regions least exposed to Mexican trade and migration. The districts that voted Democratic in 2018 and 2020 continue to be those that are most connected to Mexico by migration and trade.

California is a case in point. As the state most affected by Mexican migration and trade, it nevertheless rejected candidate Trump overwhelmingly in most counties in 2016 and 2020. While the vast majority (97 percent) of Trump-voting counties across the nation do not have significant connections to Mexico, California contains most of the few Trump-voting counties that do have large numbers of Mexican immigrants and trade links with Mexico. Yet these California counties are also the most economically dependent on Mexican migrant labor and exports to Mexican markets, further revealing contradictions in the Trump narrative.

Thirty years ago, an economic recession in California resulted in the worst modern instance of politically motivated scapegoating of immigrants before Trump. Proposition 187, a ballot referendum, barred undocumented immigrants from accessing health care, education, and other public services. The California GOP decided to use the draconian measure to mobilize its diminishing political base and ensure the reelection of a Republican governor. It proved to be a fateful move: Prop 187 passed on November 8, 1994, but it was blocked in the courts four days after it was passed. Furthermore, it ignited a massive political backlash as a surge in citizenship, voter registration, and political participation among Latinos was accompanied by the formation of a new political majority dedicated to fighting the anti-immigration agenda (Barreto and Segura 2014; Hinojosa-Ojeda and Schey 1996). Within a few years, the state of California accelerated its transition from red to blue, leading the nation in a wide range of progressive, racially inclusive policies.

A Chicanx-inspired geo-political analysis allows us to explore parallels between the unraveling of the Trump Paradox and the California rejection

of Prop 187. The Trump Paradox appears to have deepened from 2016 to 2020 as Trump became increasingly anti-Mexican and racist, seeking to excite a dwindling base of voters motivated by anti-Mexican opinions that were not rooted in actual exposure to immigrants or trade. However, Chicana-focused policy modeling reveals the negative impacts of Trump's anti-immigrant and anti-trade approach on the nation and on his supporters. The great irony is that the United States—especially white Americans at all class levels—need Mexicans and Mexico now more than ever, as the nation's aging population faces challenges in an ever-more-integrated world economy.

The Post-Trump Paradox: Benefits of Transnational Migration and Trade

Uncovering the false assertions underlying the Trump narrative and tracking the political unraveling of the Trump Paradox opens the way for an evidence-based understanding of the uneven racial distribution of the benefits arising from US-Mexico migration, trade relations, and remittances. These inequalities are rooted in the historically uneven integration of labor markets and production chains between the United States and Mexico in the post-World War II period. The irony is that the Trump Paradox is occurring just as we enter an unprecedented era of potentially equalizing complementarities between and within the United States, Mexico, and Central America. A review of trade and migration policies that began with NAFTA, however, reveals that the combination of restrictive immigration and labor policies and trade liberalization has led to a vicious cycle of stagnant wages, undocumented migration, and low-wage trade competition in Chicana labor markets. Policy advocates from both the left and the right have failed to offer strategies to break out of this counterproductive policy mix. This set the stage for the fundamentally flawed white grievance protectionism and racialized anti-trade and anti-immigrant rhetoric that was appropriated and adroitly exploited in the Trump era.

Using political, economic, and demographic data collected by the UCLA NAID Center, we show how Trump's false immigration and trade assertions contradict the reality, which is one of substantial contributions by the Mexican and Central American diasporas and by transnational markets and supply chains. Far from draining the US economy and depressing incomes for "real" Americans, Mexican immigrants and trade have made huge and growing economic contributions to the United States and its

gross domestic product (GDP). This has benefited all Americans, including Trump supporters. The GDP contribution of the Latinx diaspora population in the United States—the “Latinx GDP”—is estimated at \$2.1 trillion in 2020 (table 1). It accounts for about 11 percent of total GDP (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Robinson 2020). The Latinx GDP, if it represented a separate economy, would be the largest in Latin America and the eighth-largest in the world—after the United States, China, Japan, Germany, India, the United Kingdom, and France, and larger than Italy, Brazil, or Canada. The GDP contribution of the Mexican-origin population in the United States is nearly 100 percent of the GDP of Mexico itself, and the contribution of the US Salvadoran population is more than 300 percent of El Salvador’s GDP. The diasporas of the Northern Triangle (El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras) together generate more GDP in the United States than the combined GDP of the Northern Triangle. Equally important, they represent the fastest-growing source of transnational income, wealth, and financial assets (income, savings, and remittances) available to the Northern Triangle countries. This has immense potential for helping to resolve the economic conditions in these migrant-sending countries.

The Latinx GDP is the fastest-growing component of the US economy; it is also growing 300 percent faster than Latin America’s GDP, even though the US Latinx workforce is less than one-tenth the size of the

Table 1. The Latinx Diaspora: GDP and Population in the US Compared to Country of Origin, 2020

	US (Total)	Latinx diaspora	Mexican diaspora	Salvadoran diaspora	Guatemalan diaspora	Honduran diaspora
GDP in US (\$ billions)	19,485.39	2,140.82	1,129.53	82.04	41.75	26.08
GDP in US as % of origin country GDP	-	37.00%	97.54%	329.12%	55.21%	113.68%
Population in US	327,167,439	59,763,631	36,986,661	2,306,774	1,524,743	963,930
Population in US as % of origin country population	-	9.31%	29.31%	35.93%	8.84%	10.05%

Source: UCLA NAID Center estimations based on World Development Indicators, World Population Prospects, and American Community Survey.

Latin American workforce. The reasons for the extraordinary US-Latinx GDP growth and GDP per capita are similar: a young population with high labor market participation rates and increasing levels of education and productivity among both new immigrants and US-born Latinx workers. Latinx diasporas have contributed 70 percent of US workforce growth since 2000. It is important to note that the fastest-growing component of the US Latinx population is native-born, not foreign-born. This is particularly true of the Mexican-origin population: the US-born Chicanx population accounts for 60 percent while immigrants, both legal and undocumented, represent a declining share. The opposite is the case for the population of Central American origin, where the majority still consists of new arrivals, although the US-born population is growing fast.

Long-term demographic trends indicate that Latinx and nonwhites will account for an ever-larger plurality, and eventually a majority, of the US population. While the US population was 85 percent white in 1970, US Census projections show that proportion falling to 49 percent by 2050, with the nonwhite population rising to 51 percent (Hinojosa-Ojeda et al. 2012). The much-feared ethno-racial demographic transition to a nonwhite majority is actually generating a huge demographic dividend for the country by creating a young, healthy workforce in its prime earning years. This should be especially welcome for a white population disproportionately made up of aging white retirees—a key Trump constituency. California is taking the lead in this demographic and economic transition, with 81 percent of the California population expected to be nonwhite by 2050, followed closely by Texas.

As per capita productivity and income of the Latinx population increase, their GDP contribution will grow. Within the United States, there has already been a marked reduction in GDP per capita inequality between the Latinx and non-Latinx US populations since the 1980s. This contradicts the narrative that immigrants fail to advance economically. It is important to understand the drivers of these positive trends, particularly the role of immigration and trade policy. In contrast to the Trump narrative, the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) of 1986 actually accelerated the convergence between US Chicanx and US average incomes. Since the NAFTA trade reforms, similarly, the income gaps between the United States and Mexico have also begun to close, although more slowly.

While both migration and trade policies are important, it is clear that Mexican and Central American immigration contributes more to US GDP growth than trade with Mexico. The Mexican-origin population's

contribution to US GDP has grown dramatically in the post-NAFTA era. From 1994 to 2020, the overall contribution of the Mexican diaspora totaled \$13.4 trillion, with Mexican foreign-born immigrants contributing \$4.8 trillion; meanwhile, the total GDP contribution of exports to Mexico was just \$3.3 trillion (see table 1 for 2020 GDP data). The direct and indirect employment impacts of Mexican immigration are also significantly higher than employment supported by exports to Mexico.

Shifting Realities in Integration, Lagging Reform Policies for Trade, Migration, and Remittances

The integration of trade, migration, and remittance markets throughout greater North America has undergone significant and intertwined transformations during the post-WWII era. The juxtaposition of a high-income United States and a lower-income Mexico has always offered two possibilities: the opportunity to leverage complementary regional economic integration and development, and the threat of unequalizing vicious cycles, as uncovered by critical Chicanx transnational analysis. Achieving optimal migration and trade policy coordination for more productive and equitable development across North America has proved to be an elusive goal. In the seventy-five years since the end of World War II, economic ties have deepened and, as a result, policies have shifted from an early period of relatively high trade protection and openness to migration to a period, beginning in the 1980s and accelerating with NAFTA, of increasingly liberal trade policies accompanied by more restrictive immigration policies.

In the early postwar period, US-Mexico migration and trade integration was built on complementary structures of labor and capital that allowed for mutually beneficial exchange within and between the two countries, yet the benefits were unequally distributed. For example, the Bracero Program that was created to address wartime labor shortages brought millions of Mexicans to the United States to perform seasonal agricultural work. This work was valuable to the US economy, but the farmworkers had limited labor rights, and their work was not equitably compensated. Early stages of import-substituting industrialization in northern and central Mexico did help Mexico achieve significant convergence with the United States in per capita GDP from 1942 to 1980. This was followed, however, by increased inequality due to the exhaustion of the import-substitution model and a subsequent debt crisis that stalled growth in the 1980s, forcing a shift to Mexican export-led industrialization and unilateral import liberalization a

decade before NAFTA. Post-IRCA migration policy, meanwhile, has grown ever more restrictive, significantly distorting labor markets on both sides of the border. Rather than moving toward increased legalized labor mobility in response to the growing US need for new sources of labor, migration has been increasingly restricted due to US racialized politics. This has led to a boom in undocumented migration, with no meaningful attempt to coordinate legal migration flows with Mexico.

While Mexican migration has contributed significantly to US GDP throughout the post-WWII period, the lack of a well-functioning legal framework for managing migration flows and ensuring workers' rights has led a vicious cycle of low-wage transnational integration. Immigrant wages and productivity have been kept artificially low in the US labor market, which contributed to the growing demand (on the US side) for undocumented migration from Mesoamerica from the 1990s through 2010. This burst of undocumented migration resulted from the effects of both supply and demand. US business encouraged this flow because migrant labor was needed and relatively cheap, with wages suppressed due to migrants' undocumented status. The effect, beginning after IRCA, was to break the postwar pattern of circular migration (where workers came for seasonal work and returned to Mexico once the season ended) and increase permanent undocumented settlement in the United States. This vicious cycle was fed by growing cash-to-cash remittances, which in the absence of community-based banking for savings and local investments led to localized inflation and reduced production, resulting in higher outmigration.

The post-IRCA and post-NAFTA era first saw a decline in undocumented migration after the overall immigration highs of the 1980s; this was followed by a rapid increase with the economic expansion that peaked in 1999–2000. By the beginning of the 2000s, the continued demographic and structural change in Mexico had reached a tipping point and Mexico entered a new phase, moving toward the “end of labor abundance.” Starting in 2001, undocumented immigration began a rapid decline that continued through 2019. Net migration turned negative in 2007 with the Great Recession, and undocumented Mexican migration continued to decrease, reducing the availability of undocumented Mexican labor for the first time in the post-WWII era. Total undocumented migration recovered slightly as migrations from Central America continued to grow, but the overall downturn was reflected in a sharp decline in apprehensions by US enforcement agents during this period. Instead, the US government implemented a series of unilateral actions to restrict migration, accompanied by a massive

growth of expenditures on border enforcement. The result is that the cost per apprehension of an undocumented migrant grew from \$1,000 in 1991 to \$45,000 in 2015 (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2021).

Mesoamerica has recently entered a new development phase, with less surplus labor and less pressure for outmigration, which means that US policymakers are now in a different economic and demographic environment. Mexico benefited from US labor demand that provided an outlet for Mexican surplus labor during the 1940–2020 period of dramatic demographic growth and structural change, including currency crises, declining wages, and trade opening. Today Mexico faces different challenges, including declining population growth that contributes to the decline in net outmigration. The United States has benefited greatly from past migration, which supplied needed labor and improved the age structure of the US population. This will become even more important in the future, given continued rapid aging. Going forward, the United States, Mexico, and Central America need to consider policies that manage the declining supply of migrants in the midst of increasing US demand for labor. Such policies could allow for slower migration, with legal and human rights protections and rising wages across borders, and this in turn would allow for trade integration based on growing incomes and demand throughout Mesoamerica.

From Vicious to Virtuous Regional Integration: Chicana Alternative Immigration and Trade Scenarios

A review of the post-NAFTA era shows that Mexican-US migration policy reform can have much larger positive or negative impacts on the US labor market than US-Mexico trade flows. It is thus illogical that trade liberalization under NAFTA and its successor, the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA), has been subject to extensive binational negotiations over the last thirty years while there has been no similar urgency around binational negotiations and legislative action on labor immigration policy (Hinojosa 2002). Post-IRCA undocumented migrations have added over \$1 trillion to US GDP, while the GDP and employment effects of NAFTA were much smaller. Ironically, the growth of undocumented migration is shown to have produced much greater economic benefits for the US economy than NAFTA trade liberalization. It should be noted that these benefits greatly outweigh the relatively minor distributional implications of the indirect costs of migration and of NAFTA that were hotly debated and racialized in academic and policy circles (Borjas 2015; Card 1990; Peri and

Yasenov 2015). NAFTA critics, including labor unions, were themselves criticized for maintaining a racialized focus on the job losses that US white workers might face as a result of lax Mexican labor laws, while ignoring immigration reform for millions of Mexican immigrant workers—workers who have no labor rights in the United States yet create many more US jobs than are created by US exports to Mexico.

The renegotiation of NAFTA into the USMCA in 2018 and Trump's continued threats of tariff wars did little to change the structure of thirty years of NAFTA trade liberalization in North America, despite US labor union support for the Trump initiative. The Trump administration, meanwhile, initiated aggressive changes to immigration policy, tightening restrictions on new immigrants, separating parents from children, and threatening mass deportation and seizure of remittances. Pursuing this mix of anti-trade and anti-migration policies is likely to deepen inequalities between the US and Mesoamerican economies and between the Chicana population and the US population at large (Hinojosa and Telles 2021a). At the same time, Chicana-focused analysis points to a virtuous cycle that could be achieved by regularizing undocumented migration, financially empowering remittance flows, and enacting sustainable regional trade integration. Such policies could significantly enhance economic growth and well-being across borders, benefiting all population groups in the United States (including Trump voters) as it supports development in Mesoamerica.

Chicana-rooted policy modeling frameworks have been used to estimate the effects of alternative policies for restricting or liberalizing trade and migration in order to compare the direct and indirect effects on GDP, income, and cross-border exchange. Alternative trade policy scenarios include: (a) NAFTA disintegration; (b) trade wars between NAFTA countries; and (c) USMCA. We also specified two sets of migration scenarios: (a) Trump migration collapse, characterized by successive reductions in the immigrant labor force; and (b) a new 2021 comprehensive immigration reform proposal, including legalization of undocumented workers and future worker flows (table 2).

Echoing previous research findings, recent Trump-era modeling research supports the idea that US policy should reject anti-trade and anti-migration policies and give priority to complete and inclusive immigration reform, rather than to further trade reform. Mass deportation of 5 percent of the labor force is estimated to result in a GDP decline of up to almost 6 percent, depending on how labor and capital markets adjust (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Telles 2021a). Tax revenue would fall with GDP, and the

government deficit would increase accordingly. A Trump-envisioned mass deportation scenario amounts to a policy-induced severe depression for the United States, with negative GDP impacts on Mexico and Central America as well, due to the collapse of remittances. Most interestingly, a migration collapse scenario would do more than a trade war scenario to drive down imports and exports, even assuming the worst effects of a trade war.

Legalizing the flow of mutually beneficial circular migration and increased remittance income for Mexico are shown to significantly raise GDP and wages on both sides of the border, and to a far greater degree than policies focused on trade liberalization, such as NAFTA and USMCA (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2010). Recent modeling results indicate that implementing comprehensive and inclusive immigration reform through the recently introduced US Citizenship Act of 2021 would increase US GDP by \$2.6 trillion over ten years. It would also raise the wages of undocumented workers, which in turn would raise wages for all low-wage workers, including white workers (Hinojosa-Ojeda et al. 2021b). This scenario would lead to growth in income and productivity as undocumented immigrants are allowed to move to more productive employment, and it would also have positive impact on trade with Mexico, further reducing outmigration

Table 2. US and Mexico Real GDP Aggregates Percent Change by Model Scenario

	GDP	Exports	Imports	Employment loss (thousands)
US scenarios				
NAFTA collapse, short run US	-0.23	-0.78	-0.41	-372
NAFTA trade war, short run US	-1.90	-8.81	-4.25	-2,931
USMCA	0.10	0.10	0.10	—
Migration collapse, 100% US	-5.93	-7.04	-5.65	-8,793
Comprehensive immigration reform	2.38	1.21	2.01	—
Mexico scenarios				
NAFTA collapse, short run Mexico	-4.62	-6.9	-3.14	-2,444
NAFTA trade war, medium run Mexico	-2.03	-9.24	-15.46	-3,140
USMCA	-0.10	0.10	0.10	—
Remittance losses	-0.06	4.35	-3.31	—

Sources: UCLA NAID Center estimations; Hinojosa and Telles 2021a.

pressures. As previously calculated by the UCLA NAID Center (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2010) and corroborated by the Congressional Budget Office in 2013, projections of future immigration indicate continued decline. It is thus estimated that legalization, if implemented, would significantly reduce the number of undocumented crossings, as occurred after the 1986 reform legalized most of the then-undocumented population.

While some modeling scenarios are not realistic options, they do yield a robust result. A Trump-induced nationalist trade war and migration collapse would generate a deep vicious cycle of negative impacts. It is the worst option for everyone in greater North America, including Trump's own white political base. While the intense attack on NAFTA and Mexican migration succeeded in constructing a highly racialized policy narrative, the actual results of the new USMCA and border enforcement policies on trade and migration are shown to be minimal. Modeling Trump's proposals does allow us to systematically dismantle his false construction of racialized winners and losers of his policies. Recent modeling results in fact reaffirm the opposite of his policy narrative, showing larger and very beneficial impacts of legalization and immigration reform, clearly much larger than can be expected from any further changes in trade liberalization (Hinojosa-Ojeda and Robinson 1992). This modeling also shows that a Chicana-x-inspired transnational focus on the empowerment of immigrants and remittances would promote equitable economic development across the North American region and would be the most advantageous scenario for the United States, including white Trump voters.

From Trump to Chicana-x Inclusive Futures

The rise of Trump threatened to reverse the process of North American integration in ways likely to reduce the benefits while increasing inequalities between and within countries. In our modeling, the move to an "America First" trade protectionist policy combined with draconian anti-immigration and remittance policies produces the worst-case scenario. Nonetheless, the Trump administration continued to use anti-immigrant and protectionist trade policies that hurt both immigrants and his largely white base while racializing and polarizing US-Mexico relations and political discussions on trade and migration. The administration's renegotiation of NAFTA resulted in an agreement that was little changed. USMCA was projected to actually reduce the output and wage benefits of trade. Instead of a policy

to legalize the 11 million undocumented immigrants, which all previous administrations since Reagan had attempted in some form, Trump shifted rapidly to inhumane and hugely expensive policies of mass incarceration, deportation, and building a border wall. According to our modeling, the mix of trade, immigration, and mass deportation policies advocated by the administration, if carried out fully, would further distort the process of economic integration in greater North America. Moreover, by damaging the economies of Mexico and Central America, it would lead to new pressure for undocumented immigration. In a Trump vicious cycle, mass deportations would have similarly devastating effects in Mexico and Central America, especially by drastically reducing the flow of remittances. This would likely result in further regional dislocations in that region, sending new waves of migration to the border.

The saddest irony is that Trump's cruel anti-migrant and anti-trade policy was designed to address a "problem" that is already largely being resolved through demographic change and growing integration between the United States and Mesoamerica. A Chicanx transnational perspective on US-Mexico labor market interdependence has long argued that complementary policies designed to integrate regional migration, production, and wage growth can bring about local development that in turn can address the root causes of regional inequalities and undocumented migration. The potential gains from complementary pro-development trade and migration legalization policies are stronger than ever. Chicanx-inspired transnational policy modeling, using detailed data on labor markets, has sought to comprehensively model both vicious and virtuous scenarios of trade and migration and analyze impacts on both the United States and Mexico. Researchers using this approach were among the first to hypothesize, in 1991, that an immediate rapid liberalization of Mexican agriculture could have the effect of accelerating outmigration in the absence of a major development effort directed to Mexican rural areas. The same modeling also identified a "NAFTA migration hump" or Mexican "demographic hump," predicting that emigration of Mexico's young workforce would lead to population aging and declining net migration. This modeling was used to support a fifteen-year tariff elimination schedule for Mexican corn and agriculture negotiated under NAFTA to allow time for this rural-to-urban structural and demographic transition to work itself out (Levy and van Wijnbergen 1992; Robinson et al. 1993).

This critical modeling of policy choices from a Chicanx point of view was the basis for the formation of broad political coalitions within

and between the United States and Mesoamerica during the debates on IRCA and NAFTA. These led to an alternative proposal for a North American Development Bank (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2002). The original vision for the NADB was formed during NAFTA debates by mapping the unequal impacts of NAFTA on the Chicana transnational population and demanding a cross-border institution dedicated to raising incomes and renewing investments in an emerging North American regional economy. Twenty-five years after its founding, the Chicana-inspired NADB has invested billions of dollars in environmental infrastructure beneficial to both the United States and Mexico. It has addressed a significant part of NAFTA-related displacement, showing that there is a way to finance US-Mexico integration, environmental sustainability, and full community adjustment costs with relatively limited resources (Hinojosa-Ojeda 2021).

Once again, we need the Chicana perspective as we look at a post-Trump policy future. The evidence that has emerged from our research is clear: oppressive immigration policies combined with the disintegration of regional trade would drastically harm both countries, whereas a move toward a major restructuring of migration, remittances, and trade could reinforce the emerging macro-demographic trends toward declining net migration. Such policy reforms would raise real wages and improve labor conditions, reducing income inequality while still meeting US labor demands. Comprehensive immigration reform would provide \$2.6 trillion in returns over ten years, raising wages and productivity as well as consumption and taxes, and generating positive impacts in areas of both high and low concentration of Mexican immigration (Hinojosa-Ojeda et al. 2021b). Citizenship for DACA recipients (under the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program) would provide even higher returns to the US economy: \$3.6 trillion over forty years (Hinojosa-Ojeda et al. 2012). As happened with IRCA, immigration reform today would raise wages for immigrants, thereby dampening demand for lower-skilled undocumented migration and reducing the need for greater border enforcement.

The Biden-Harris administration has included provisions in the Citizenship Act of 2021 to “address the root causes of migration,” primarily through the use of US taxpayer-funded foreign assistance of approximately \$1 billion per year for the poor countries in Latin America that are the source of most new migrants. However, a Chicana transnational perspective shows the inadequacy of this policy response. The meager proposed

aid is vastly overshadowed by the sum total of family remittances from the diaspora to Mexico and the Northern Triangle. These remittances are projected to grow from \$74 billion in 2021 to \$124 billion in 2031, totaling \$1 trillion over the next ten years—growth largely due to higher incomes among legalized current immigrants and new legal migrants. Policies to promote the financial inclusion of remittances, and their conversion to savings and investment, would maximize the benefits of this enormous cash flow. Such policies could help communities shift from high-cost, cash-to-cash transfers to digital accounts, allowing the transfer of funds at very low cost to local financial institutions in migrant-sending communities (Carmona, González, and Hernández 2018). Assuming a 10 percent conversion to savings and investment, this would generate a total of \$100 billion in employment-generating investments in migrant-sending regions over the next decade.

Comparative modeling of trade and migration between the United States and Mesoamerica shows that the largest employment impacts in both regions can be obtained from an agenda that promotes increased wages through immigrant incorporation, financial empowerment, and minimum wage policies. Transnationally coordinated migration, remittance, and incomes policies can be designed to raise wages, not walls, within and across world regions. Social scientific and empirical research suggests the potency of a complementary, multiracial, and inclusive US-Mesoamerican development agenda.

Now more than ever, the Chicanx perspective can help create equitable, inclusive, and mutually beneficial relations between developed and developing countries. Ironically, Trump's media barrages of anti-immigrant hatred forced much of the nation to see what Chicanxs have long seen: detention centers, families ripped apart, and societal rejection, along with resistance and recovery. To see what Chicanxs see means connecting with a human plea for a reasoned and compassionate vision and creating a new, healing worldview. "Seeing from below" allows one to observe the world of white privilege and white supremacy as it appears to an outsider, allowing the wider population to understand how the dominant narrative must be critically questioned. Adopting a Chicanx perspective is a first step toward dismantling the Trump narrative and constructing a more inclusive, equitable, and democratic vision of the future.

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