

“NO IMMIGRANT FAMILIES SHOULD LIVE IN FEAR”:
ANALYZING ANTI-LATINX MIGRANT NARRATIVES AND
RESISTING XENOPHOBIA ON SOCIAL MEDIA

by

TAYLORROSE TAVARES

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Anthropology
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Science

May 2023

An Abstract of the Thesis of

TaylorRose Tavares for the degree of Bachelor of Science
in the Department of Anthropology to be taken June 2023

Title: “No Immigrant Families Should Live in Fear”: Analyzing Anti-Latinx Migrant Narratives
and Resisting Xenophobia on Social Media

Approved: Catalina M. de Onís, PhD
Primary Thesis Advisor

This undergraduate thesis explores two dominant narratives, the “Come Here” Narrative and the “Latino Threat” Narrative, in US immigration policies and public discourse. The project contends that the “Come Here” Narrative, named by the author, narrowly values Latinx migrants as sources of cheap labor for a capitalist economy. Meanwhile, the “Latino Threat” Narrative deems these individuals a threat to white US America’s culture and economy (Chavez, 2008). The author argues that the Trump Administration’s policies (2016-2020) targeting Latinx migrants were driven by and supported the latter narrative. Notably, this presidency coincided with the increased reliance on social media to communicate xenophobic claims. Using an interdisciplinary lens, the author defines and explains several concepts, including race, racialization, systems of power, illegality, deportability, and disposability. The thesis then explores how these concepts are influenced by policy and how policy shapes understandings of racialization and othering. To do so, the author analyzes social media posts about the Bracero Program and the 2019 Public Charge Rule to understand how the “Come Here” and “Latino Threat” narratives existed simultaneously and how the latter rhetoric emerges strongly in online spaces. The studied rhetoric features both conservative figures and migrant justice groups and advocates. The thesis concludes with a call for readers to act in defense of migrant justice both online and offline.

Acknowledgements

As a woman of color, writing a thesis on the racialization of Latinx migrants in the US is important to me because it illuminates the experiences and challenges of a marginalized community that shares a similar racial and ethnic identity to myself while contributing to the broader discourse on systemic racism and oppression. My goal is to amplify the voices of Latinx migrants, highlighting the impact of their race and immigration status on their daily lives, while showcasing their resilience in the face of adversity.

None of this would have been possible without the help of Professor Catalina de Onís who took on my thesis project late in the year, but despite the challenging circumstances, has provided invaluable guidance and expertise to help shape the outcome of my research. Thank you for your dedication and commitment to my academic success and for your unwavering support throughout this process. I would also like to thank Professor Jessica Vasquez-Tokos for agreeing to work on this project as a second reader and providing valuable resources to me that inspired the direction of this project.

I find it necessary to mention those who did not work on this project directly but helped guide me throughout the entire process including Daphne Gallagher and Michael Moffit. Whether it was through connecting me to various resources, providing moral support, or offering solutions to my seemingly endless problems your efforts did not go unnoticed. Thank you.

To my mom and Avo, I cannot express enough gratitude for your encouragement and constant reminders that I possess boundless capabilities. To my cherished friends and beloved partner, thank you for keeping me sane even during the most arduous challenges this project brought forth.

Table of Contents

List of Figures	5
Introduction	6
Literature Review	10
Concepts of Race and Systems of Power	10
Illegality, Deportability, and Disposability	11
The 1942 Bracero Program	12
The Latino Threat Narrative	14
Revolving Door	15
The 2019 Public Charge Rule	16
Social Media as a Space to Spread and Resist Hate	19
Methodology	22
Analysis	25
Discussion	40
Conclusion	47
Bibliography	49

List of Figures

Fig. 1 US Department of Homeland Security (2012)	15
Fig. 3 Attorney General Ken Paxton’s Tweet (2022)	26
Fig. 4 Former Senior Advisor Stephen Miller’s Tweet (2022)	28
Fig. 5 Chispa’s Reposted Twitter Post on Instagram (2020)	31
Fig. 6 The National Partnership for New Americans’ Instagram Post (2020)	33
Fig. 7 Make the Road New York’s Instagram Post (2019)	36
Fig. 8 Krish O’Mara Vignarajah’s Twitter Post in Response to Camilo Montoya-Galvez (2022)	37
Fig. 9 Immigrant History Initiative’s Instagram Post, “The Labor of People of Color Built This Country” (2020)	42
Fig. 10 American History Museum’s Instagram Post (2020)	43
Fig. 11 American History Museum’s Instagram Post – Caption (2020)	44

Introduction

Migration is a fundamental part of the United States and has been since the country's inception. Nativist discourse constitutes the fear of "illegal aliens," along with virulent laws and policies that seek to deter migrants¹ from entering and to punish those who arrive in the country. Such policies often render undocumented individuals vulnerable in a myriad of ways. Most notably, individuals who avoid detention but remain in the country undocumented live in a constant state of fear that stems from notions of illegality and deportability. Simultaneously, as migrant laborers power the US supply of cheap labor, notions of disposability paradoxically mark these individuals as both necessary and expendable.

These notions and associated policies have developed from two narratives existent throughout US history. One of these narratives I call the "Come Here" Narrative or the notion that migrants, particularly Latinx² migrants, are valuable and wanted for the use of cheap labor for a capitalist economy.³ The other narrative, coined by Leo Chavez (2008, p. 3) is the Latino

¹ I use the term "migrant" to refer to migrants, immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers regardless of their documentation status. This language seeks to recognize that the rigid legal classifications of different types of migrants is actually much more fluid than understood by most because one can move from being documented to undocumented in a moment (Chávez, 2013, p. 153). Additionally, the terms immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeker holds different weights for different racial groups. The use of the term "migrant" is an attempt to use less charged language to describe people who enter the country.

² I use the term "Latinx" rather than Latina/Latino as a gender-neutral or non-binary alternative to be gender-inclusive. I will use the term "Latino" in reference to the Latino Threat Narrative since this was the term coined by Chavez and did not include "Latinx" in the original language.

³ Leo Chavez (2008, p.213) coined another narrative—the Contribution Narrative—that counters the Latino Threat Narrative by pointing out the various contributions Latinx migrants have offered to the nation's society, economy, and culture. Although the "Come Here" Narrative counters the Latino Threat Narrative under the notion that Latinx migrants are valuable for cheap labor, it also constitutes harmful rhetoric and can function with cruel consequences by associating the value of Latinx migrants with their monetary contributions to a nation rather than their personhood.

Threat Narrative or the notion that Latinx individuals threaten white US America's culture and economy.⁴

There have been instances when the Latino Threat Narrative superseded the "Come Here" Narrative on both the state and national levels. Notably, the Trump Administration (2016-2020) enacted several policies that targeted Latinx migrants, preventing their entry into the country and deeming people previously eligible for residency ineligible and even deportable.⁵ These Trump Administration policies, driven by and supporting the Latino Threat Narrative, emerged during a time when the visibility of racism and white supremacy was particularly unapologetic and celebrated by former President Trump. This timeframe, in which the Latino Threat Narrative supersedes the "Come Here" Narrative, coincides with increased reliance on social media, including by the White House.

Social media allows people across the globe who have aligning beliefs to share their ideologies together. At the same time, it provides a space where clashing beliefs and values can be communicated. Within this milieu, the Latino Threat Narrative circulates and amplifies on social media. At the same time, social media acts as a place where advocacy groups can educate, organize, and support individuals who are most negatively affected by the Latino Threat Narrative, thus creating a space for resistance.

⁴ Although Mexicans are often the focus of the Latino Threat Narrative, "public discourse often includes immigration from Latin America in general, as well as U.S.-born Americans of Latin American descent" (Chavez, 2008, p. 3). Thus, the broader and more inclusive term Latino is used in reference to the Latino Threat Narrative, while recognizing that Latinos actually vary greatly in terms of their historical backgrounds and success in integrating into U.S. social and economic life.

⁵ The Latino Threat Narrative persists today during the Biden Administration as they plan to open processing centers across Latin America where Latinx migrants would have to request permission to come to the United States, barring tens of thousands from seeking relief at the U.S./Mexico border while doubling down on rapid deportations in the United States (Democracy Now, 2023).

Considering various US immigration policies and their impact, as well as how they shape and are shaped by the Latino Threat and “Come Here” Narratives, this thesis asks the questions: *How do the “Come Here” Narrative and the Latino Threat Narrative function simultaneously in certain US immigration policies? How is the Latino Threat Narrative made more visible on social media? How can social media provide a space for resistance for those most negatively affected by the Latino Threat Narrative?* In this thesis, I determine that the “Come Here” Narrative and the Latino Threat Narrative function simultaneously in certain United States immigration policies by portraying migrants as both needed and threatening. I also uncover that the Latino Threat Narrative is amplified on social media through sharing biased and negative portrayals of Latinx migrants; however, social media can also provide a space for resistance for those most negatively affected by this narrative.

This thesis provides support for these claims through a series of steps. First, I will define and explain several concepts through an interdisciplinary lens. These concepts include race, racialization, systems of power, illegality, deportability, and disposability. Exploring these concepts will allow for deepened understandings of racialization and othering and their rhetorical constructions within the United States. I will use previous scholarly explanations to understand how these concepts are influenced by policy and how policy shapes these understandings. Second, this orientation will assist my exploration of various US policies, particularly the 1942 Bracero Program and the Public Charge Rule. Third, I will exemplify how the “Come Here” and Latino Threat Narratives came to exist simultaneously to create a “revolving door” of incoming and outgoing migrants within the United States. Fourth, I will describe my methodology and analyze posts about the Bracero Program and the 2019 Public Charge Rule to understand how the “Come Here” and Latino Threat narratives existed simultaneously and how the latter rhetoric

emerges strongly in online spaces during and following Trump's presidency. In this section, I also examine how different social media actors and accounts resist nativist, xenophobic rhetoric. Finally, I discuss the implications of this project's analysis and directions for future research. I conclude with a call for readers to act in defense of migrant justice online and in spaces beyond our screens.

Literature Review

Concepts of Race and Systems of Power

Many Critical Race Studies and other similarly aligned scholars assert that race holds no biological basis; however, they argue the concept holds real implications for a person's social identity and life. Race posits legitimate consequences in the way that a person is perceived outwardly, yet these impacts only occur because of the social constructions developed within society (Omi & Winant, 2015).⁶ Within white supremacist and colonialist hierarchies, some bodies hold more value than other bodies creating significant social dissonance for specific groups. The way that a group is outwardly perceived thus influences their value within society.

Racial categories are examined and defined differently in different cultures. In the United States, race tends to be conceptualized as the phenotypical difference of skin color in individuals. Although many scholars, including those within the United States, understand race as a concept constructed by society, rather than on a biological basis, they recognize that racial categories exist within the United States. White is viewed as “normal,” while any other skin color or racial designation is “othered.” Racial othering thus applies differences to racial categories and can imply that one race is superior to another race.⁷ For migrants specifically, notions of racial categories and superiority are how systems of power operate. Holmes (2013, p. 54) points out

⁶ Omi & Winant (2015) recognize that race is a way of “making up people.” They note that classifications of race are often unreliable. State-imposed classifications and even scientific classifications of race have changed and evolved greatly throughout history, yet as social beings, we find it necessary to categorize people. These categories are subject to “enormous variation over historical time and space” and their “definitions, meanings, and overall coherence [...] are always subject to multiple interpretations” (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 105).

⁷ This is analyzed in police settings and subsequently in immigration enforcement settings through what Beliso-De Jesús (2020, p. 145) refers to as “jungle logic” or the “implicit notions that racial others are inherently ‘primitive,’ ‘backward,’ and ‘dangerous.’”

that “the powerful tend to believe they deserve the success they have had and that the powerless have brought their problems on themselves.” This way of thinking normalizes and naturalizes racism and exploitation, especially for migrants and other individuals who are marked as different and “foreign.”

Illegality, Deportability, and Disposability

Through processes of racialization in US policy, migrants are meant to live in a constant state of fear. Nicholas De Genova (2002) argues that it has become a worldwide regime to create rigid political identities (legal vs. illegal, migrant vs. citizen). When a person does not belong, they become illegal, resulting in Illegality, or the “erasure of legal personhood” (De Genova, 2022, p. 427). Deportability, or the constant state of feeling at risk and worthy of removal, is the intended consequence of this Illegality, not deportation. Many political and other actors describe deportation, or the threat of deportation, as the necessary solution to rising immigration crises in the United States.⁸

Along with notions of deportability, have come notions of disposability. Despite the country’s long-standing, problematic framing as a “nation of immigrants,” the United States has sought and accepted two kinds of migrants—those invited to become US Americans and those desired as disposable labor (Flores, 2020). In sum, Latinx migrants are excluded from the United States through rigid policies and border enforcement practices, yet their supply of cheap labor is needed for economic advancement. The created notions of illegality, deportability, and disposability thus work to create rigid political identities, inculcate fear, and produce cheap labor

⁸ Deportation as a “solution” to rising migration has created a paradox in which “the United States remains open to undocumented Mexican migration even as it virtually precludes legal Mexican migration, a phenomenon necessitated by contradictions between US immigration law and economic practice” (Flores, 2020, p. 5).

while keeping migrant people and communities vulnerable within the United States. As historical policies and their present-day impacts reveal, these relationships are not new.

The 1942 Bracero Program

The word braceros comes from the Spanish root “brazo,” which means “arm,” with the added suffix “ero,” which usually signifies “he who works.” Braceros can thus be understood to mean “he who works with his arms,” a suitable name for the temporary guest worker program that brought millions of impoverished Mexicans to provide manual labor in the United States between 1942 and 1964 (Mandeel, 2014). After the Japanese military attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the United States entered the second world war, triggering fears of labor shortages, particularly in the agricultural sector of the economy. The political rhetoric framed the United States as “a country in need of the talents of those outside our national frontiers” (Bickerton, 2000, p. 898). Mexico also faced high unemployment rates. With this combination of circumstances in both countries, the two governments signed agreements that created the Emergency Farm Labor Program, otherwise known as the Bracero Program (Mandeel, 2014, p. 171).

Signed on August 4, 1942, the Bracero Program was a government-to-government temporary guest worker program, whereby young male Mexican peasants would work in the United States for periods between six weeks and six months at a time and return to Mexico after fulfilling their contracts (Mandeel, 2014, p. 172). The program lasted for several years; however, it came to be seen as an exploitative labor regime similar to Southern sharecropping.⁹ Thus, in 1964, Congress voted to terminate it (Mandeel, 2014). The program was phased out between

⁹ While the Bracero Program provided economic opportunities for many Mexican workers, it also facilitated the exploitation of vulnerable migrants due to the power imbalances and inadequate safeguards in place (Mandeel, 2014).

1965 and 1967 and the flow went to zero in 1968. The program's ending, however, created a massive influx of undocumented migration into the United States. By the late 1950s, the circular flow of Mexican migrants had become deeply embedded in employer practices and migrant expectations. Well-developed and widely accessible migrant networks existed, so when avenues for legal entry suddenly ended, the migratory flows did not dissipate. The movements simply continued without authorization or documents (Massey & Pren, 2012). In other words, the end of the Bracero Program corresponded in time with the rise of surreptitious migration.

The Bracero Program provides a guide for understanding how "Come Here" Narratives, particularly aimed towards Latinx individuals, developed in the United States. At the same time, the program provides insight into the development of Latino Threat Narratives about Latinx migrants and how the "Come Here" Narrative can constitute and support the Latino Threat Narrative. While the United States supported a "Come Here" Narrative for migrant laborers during this time, the political-economic power system also worked to keep the migrant pool vulnerable through the implementation of notions of illegality, deportability, and disposability. The United States government and industry incorporated these notions by subjecting migrant laborers to poor working conditions, preventing migrant laborers from unionizing, and reinforcing the idea that migrant laborers were easily replaceable.¹⁰

Of course, the Bracero Program does not mark the only point in history in which the "Come Here" and Latino Threat Narratives existed simultaneously. The Immigration Reform and Control Act sought to discourage and penalize employers who hired unauthorized workers while

¹⁰ The "Come Here" Narrative can function with cruel consequences through the exploitation of migrant laborers, often subjecting them to dangerous and unjust labor practices as seen in health risks arising from pesticide exposure and other work-related hazards. These harms include "harassment, wage theft, long hours, overwork, and payroll deductions for equipment" (Sifuentez, 2016, p. 90).

creating some paths to citizenship for individuals who had been in the United States prior to 1982 (Thurber, n.d.). This act paradoxically discouraged unauthorized workers in the country while also making citizenship more possible, at least for some. Nonetheless, as Chavez (2001, 2008) notes, the end of the Bracero Program marks a significant time in which the Latino Threat Narrative begins to rise within the United States.

The Latino Threat Narrative

The rise in unauthorized migration following the end of the Bracero Program increased the Latino Threat Narrative in the United States. This narrative posits that Latinx individuals are not like previous migrant groups who ultimately became part of the nation. Instead, they are unwilling or incapable of integration into the national community. The narrative suggests that Latinx migrants are “part of an invading force from south of the border that is bent on reconquering land that was formerly theirs (the US Southwest) and destroying the American way of life” (Chavez, 2008, p. 3). Chavez (2001, 2008) documented the rise of this narrative in US American media after the 1960s. After coding national magazine covers on migration as positive, negative, or neutral, he found that a steady rise of negative portrayals occurred through the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. It is important to note that the rise in this narrative understanding occurred during a time of increasing income inequality, and as social psychologist Susan Fiske (2011, p. 89) notes, “feeling individually deprived... may alert a person to feeling collectively deprived... [and] this collective feeling leads to blaming out-groups (immigrants[]).” The Latino Threat Narrative not only illustrated Mexican migration as a crisis in the United States, but it also led to an increase in border patrol enforcement and revolving door policies.

Revolving Door

The combination of the rising Latino Threat Narrative along with the increase in conservatism in the United States can be associated with the passage of increasingly restrictionist immigration legislation and the implementation of ever more stringent enforcement policies. As shown in the figure below, undocumented migration rose from 1965 to 1977, as the circulation of the Bracero Era was reestablished. These movements leveled off after 1977 and fluctuated before ultimately falling. In contrast, the total number of apprehensions grew at a faster pace after 1977, peaking at 1.7 million in 1986 before declining to approximately 900,000 and then rising again to 1.3 million by 1995 (Mandeel, 2014).

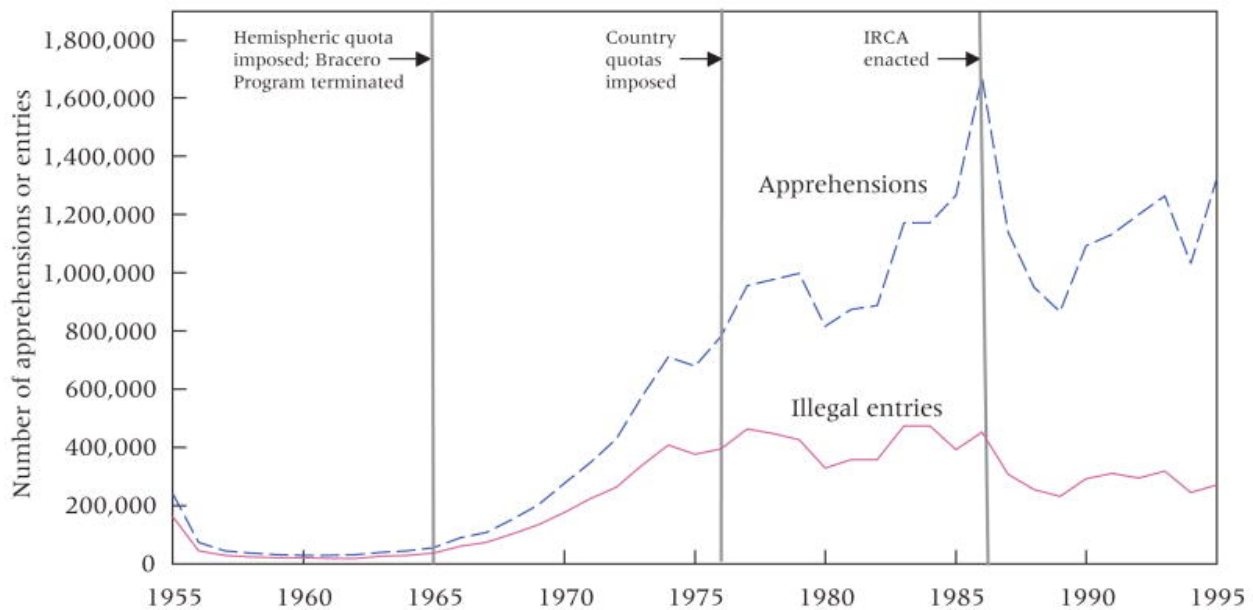


Fig. 1 US Department of Homeland Security (2012)

In other words, anti-migrant sentiment drove migration enforcement to new heights, despite the lack of any real increase in unauthorized migration after the late 1970s. The Latino Threat Narrative apprehended Mexican or Latinx people more broadly. In 1965, the 55,000 Mexicans apprehended represented 50 percent of all apprehensions; two decades later, the 1.2 million Mexicans apprehended made up 94 percent of total apprehensions (Goodman, 2020).

Nonetheless, migrants deported to Mexico often found themselves returning to the United States for various reasons including a demand for migrant labor in the United States, wage differentials, and the desire to reunite with family. As a result, authorities expelled many people on multiple occasions (Goodman, 2020). This situation resulted in a revolving door of migrant inflow and expulsion at the United States/Mexico border. Border Patrol agents then used the ever-rising number of apprehensions and deportations inherent in the revolving door system to simultaneously celebrate their “accomplishments” and draw attention to the dire need for additional funding, all while helping to fulfill the United States’ labor needs (Goodman, 2020). This revolving door effect created a sense of perpetual crisis for US citizens accustomed to the Latino Threat Narrative as well as for undocumented migrants who were simultaneously acting to fulfill labor needs in the United States while being reified into racist stereotypes—irrespective of citizenship or legal status—as prototypical “illegal aliens.” Within the Latino Threat Narrative, the development of illegality, deportability, and disposability took hold and targeted undocumented migrants. This dominant narrative not only shaped public perception of Latinx migrants but also influenced recent policymaking and enforcement, such as the 2019 Public Charge Rule.

The 2019 Public Charge Rule

The concept of a “public charge” has been part of immigration law in the United States since at least 1882. The concept was first established by Congress in 1882 to allow the United States government to deny a visa to “any person unable to take care of himself or herself without becoming a public charge” (Immigration Act of 1882, ch. 376, § 2). This law was updated by Congress in 1891, preventing the entry of anyone who “is likely at any time to become a public

charge” (Immigration Act of 1891, ch. 551, § 1, 26 Stat. 1084, 1084). Neither law, however, defined what “public charge” meant. By 1999, migration officers adopted the definition that a public charge is someone “primarily dependent on the government for subsistence,” as demonstrated by either using public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization for long-term care at government expense (Federal Register 28689, Sec. 1, 1999). Under this definition, a public charge included Supplemental Security Income, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (commonly known as “welfare”), State and local cash assistance (sometimes called “General Assistance”), and Medicaid or other programs supporting long-term institutionalized care such as in nursing homes or mental health institutions (Bernardo, 2022).

Although this definition of a “public charge” seems rather restrictive, very few migrants had previously been denied green cards on public-charge grounds for two primary reasons. First, Congress already barred most migrants from using public benefits. Second, Congress requires that most green card applicants have a financial sponsor who can demonstrate sufficient income to prevent future use of government assistance (Bernardo, 2022). During the Trump Administration, the Public Charge rule was dramatically expanded to reduce the number of people who were eligible for green cards and other visas by redefining what made them “dependent” on government benefits.

During the Trump Administration, the Department of Homeland Security announced a new proposed public charge regulation in 2018 and published a final regulation in 2019, which went into effect on February 24, 2020. In this expanded public charge rule, green card and other visa applicants could be denied not for being “primarily dependent on the government for subsistence” but instead for being “more likely than not” to use certain public benefits at any point in the future (Federal Register 41292, sec. 1, A). Under the final regulation published in

2019, new criteria for denying a green card application from within the United States included all of the public benefits previously listed as a “public charge” as well as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, commonly known as “Food Stamps”), Section 8 housing and rental assistance, federal housing subsidies, and any nonemergency Medicaid benefits (with exceptions for children under 21, people with disabilities, pregnant women, and mothers within 60 days after giving birth) (Bernardo, 2022).

The new definition of a public charge was published through the Department of Homeland Security. This source is important to note because the Department of Homeland Security did not have the authority to make any person ineligible for these benefits because they are administered by other federal agencies under various acts of Congress (Bernardo, 2022). As a result, this Trump-era policy was effectively penalizing visa applicants for using benefits they were allowed to use under existing law. Additionally, the great majority of people applying for green cards were not eligible for the very benefits that the new public charge rule sought to penalize. Nonetheless, the rule frightened many people into dis-enrolling from public benefits even though they did not need to.

The Public Charge Rule marks one point in which the Latino Threat Narrative supersedes the “Come Here” Narrative. This political effort implements notions of the Latino Threat Narrative because it specifically targets working-class migrants of color. This 2019 rule does not mark the only point in history in which the Latino Threat Narrative superseded the “Come Here” Narrative, however. In the 1990s, California’s Proposition 187 barred unauthorized migrants from all public services representing a point in which the Latino Threat Narrative superseded the “Come Here” Narrative on a state level (Thurber, n.d.). Nonetheless, the enactment of the 2019 Public Charge Rule represents the most recent superseding at a national level, though evidence

suggests the Biden Administration's rhetoric and policies also contribute to this threat narrative (Democracy Now, 2023). The Public Charge Rule significantly aligns with a point in time in which many people in the country are emboldened by President Trump and political allies to make a spectacle of racism and xenophobia, including on social media.

Social Media as a Space to Spread and Resist Hate

For the past many years, social media have evolved and grown in their influences. Before the presence of social media platforms, such as Instagram and Twitter, mass media was primarily experienced through television, radio, and print. With the evolution of the internet and mobile technology, people now have access to mass media in their hands. Social media allows easy access to vast amounts of information. A caveat to the broad reach and easy accessibility of social media is the fierce spread of misinformation and disinformation on the internet (Flores-Yeffal et al., 2018). This dispersal can often lead to the spread of hateful and derogatory messages, symbols, and associations. Such hate often derives from "moral panics," which are processes in which "groups are framed as an eminent threat when the core values of the overall society seem challenged" (Flores-Yeffal et al., 2018, p. 2). Since the Latino Threat Narrative centers on the notion that Latinx migrants are unwilling and incapable of integrating into the national community (Chavez, 2008), this narrative can be considered a moral panic, especially if considered in conjunction with former President Trump's usage of racist and derogatory language to describe Latinx migrants.

- **Pr brooks** @paila @TeamTrump hell yes deport these people who spawn hate all over! We don't need to be paying for these people who hate America #sendthemback
- **Jay Dillon** @vtology @TeamTrump @LindaSuhler All illegal aliens are criminal aliens.
- **AmericanPride** @Americanspirit16 @TeamTrump WE THE PEOPLE WILL RISE AND PROTECT OUR COUNTRY FROM LIES, DECEIT, CHEATS & CORRUPTION = NO TOLERANCE 4 THIS BEHAVIOR
- **CAROL** @9285542612t @TeamTrump IM MEXICAN AMERICAN! 2ND GENERATION CITIZEN! AND I WANT TRUMP FOR LEGAL IMMIGRATION NOT ILLEGAL MIGRATION!

Fig. 2 Series of Twitter Posts Circulating the Latino Threat Narrative (2018)

Social media algorithms can contribute to spreading harmful narratives online. These algorithms are designed to personalize content and tailor it to users' interests and preferences by creating filter bubbles that limit exposure to diverse perspectives. These algorithms make predictions about the material that users will interact with in the future based on data from past behaviors and interactions (Pariser, 2011). As a result, users are more likely to be presented with content that reinforces their existing beliefs and ideologies while content that challenges those beliefs or presents new ideas are deemphasized or filtered out entirely. Subsequently, users might miss out on a variety of viewpoints, particularly those that are marginalized or underrepresented by dominant systems of power. Social media algorithms also prioritize content that is likely to generate engagement and interactions such as likes, comments, and shares, which can encourage sensationalized or polarizing content over some more nuanced or complex perspectives.

In relation to the 2019 Public Charge Rule, the idea that migrants could rely heavily on public benefits, posits a moral panic for US Americans worried about where their tax dollars go.

As a result, proponents of the 2019 Public Charge Rule utilize the Latino Threat Narrative to bolster notions that Latinx migrants are the reason for moral panic in the United States and social media algorithms can assist in spreading these notions. The proponents particularly vocalized their support of the Rule following the Biden Administration’s deregulation of the rule, which stated that the 2019 Rule would no longer be enforced on a national level in 2021. Furthermore, the Department of Homeland Security’s reversal of the 2019 Public Charge Rule allowed migrants to receive public benefits without being considered a “public charge” in 2022. Though this rule is no longer in effect, its ideological and communication impacts endure. At the same time, migrant justice and other advocacy groups have resisted “public charge” fears in online spaces to advocate for dignity and access to resources. To analyze discourses in opposition to and in solidarity with migrant peoples, I first overview my methodology for engaging social media posts.

Methodology

A vast variety of information can be gleaned from a text—from its literal meaning to the subtext, symbolism, assumptions, and values this material reveals. Using textual analysis, scholars can gather previously created information and then connect the text to a broader, social, political, cultural, or artistic context. The utilization of textual analysis to connect a text to a greater context can also be referred to as critical textual analysis. The addition of the word “critical” in this context emphasizes that this analysis will “aim to expose the dominant patterns of power and authority that remain hidden from view or become normalized through routine or everyday activity” (Burnett & Merchant, 2011, p. 43). Critical textual analysis thus aims to raise awareness of how everyday lives and actions are constructed and constrained through the apparatus of power, while paving ways for resistance, emancipation, or reclamation of power by creating new spaces for dialogue.

My work will focus on how Latinx people are “positioned” by the dominant discourses and practices that surround race in textual discussions of migrants in the United States. First, however, it is important to define what a “text” is in the context of this thesis. A text can be a piece of writing. In this context, a text can also be any object whose meaning and significance can be interpreted in depth—a film, an image, an artifact, or even a place (Caulfield, 2022). The methods used to analyze a text vary according to the type of object and the purpose of the analysis. I will utilize social media as a text for close textual analysis, specifically Instagram and Twitter posts by several public and political figures, as well as organizations and groups.

Instagram and Twitter were selected as the primary platforms for analysis due to their prominence and unique characteristics within the social media landscape. Instagram was chosen for its visual-oriented nature, making it an ideal platform for examining the impact of visual

content on user engagement and communication patterns. Additionally, Instagram's ability to reach a broad audience and its popularity among younger demographics provide an opportunity to examine how narratives about Latinx migrants are shaped and disseminated among different age groups and communities. When I began using Instagram, however, I encountered several limitations and obstacles due to my regular activity on the social media platform. As an active user of Instagram, all searches for content worth analysis were consistent with my previous activity on the platform. I tend to like posts, follow accounts, and share content that resists the Latino Threat Narrative and advocates for Latinx migrants, so the posts I found on Instagram were from advocacy groups, very few posts that I encountered constituted the Latino Threat Narrative. As a result, I found it necessary to utilize a platform that I had not previously used, such as Twitter.

Twitter was selected due to its real-time and text-based nature, which facilitates the study of immediate reactions, public opinions, and information diffusion. Twitter's character limit encourages concise and succinct communication, making it a platform for users to share their thoughts, opinions, and news updates. The platform's extensive use of hashtags and retweet functionality also allows for tracking and analyzing the spread of information and the formation of online communities. Furthermore, Twitter's public nature and active engagement in current events make it an ideal platform for investigating social and political discussions, activism, and public sentiment.

To conduct a critical textual analysis of social media posts, several aspects of each text will be examined, including the use of specific words and framing. The perceived target audience and how the post relates to other texts, such as accompanying hashtags, will also be considered. Incorporating media literacy, the analysis will also consider the figure or group posting the text,

their biases, and the main claim made in the post. The veracity of the claim will be assessed, determining if it is false, factual, or a combination. Analyses will vary in length to maintain clarity while mitigating redundancy, given that most of the posts I selected repeat similar information. The posts I have selected for analysis do not reflect the entire catalog of posts that I researched, nor do they reflect the abundance of posts available through social media. The posts that I have selected are, however, generative examples for demonstrating how the Latino Threat narrative circulates and how this harmful rhetoric is resisted.

Analysis

The United States has a long history of migration and the policies that govern the country and its residents. Two seemingly contradictory narratives have developed throughout this history: the “Come Here” Narrative and the Latino Threat Narrative. Despite their opposing nature, these narratives often function simultaneously and synergistically in certain US immigration policies. The result is a revolving door of incoming and outgoing migrants that renders undocumented individuals vulnerable in a myriad of ways. This vulnerability is compounded by the visibility of the Latino Threat Narrative on social media, where like-minded individuals can share and amplify xenophobic rhetoric. Such discourse was particularly pervasive following the deregulation and reversal of the 2019 Public Charge in 2022.

Attorney General of Texas Ken Paxton strongly opposed President Biden’s deregulation of the 2019 Public Charge Rule. He stated, “Dems want to give millions in freebies to illegals!” In analyzing the specific verbiage used in his post, we see that Attorney General Paxton is utilizing the Latino Threat Narrative to spread misinformation and hateful rhetoric.

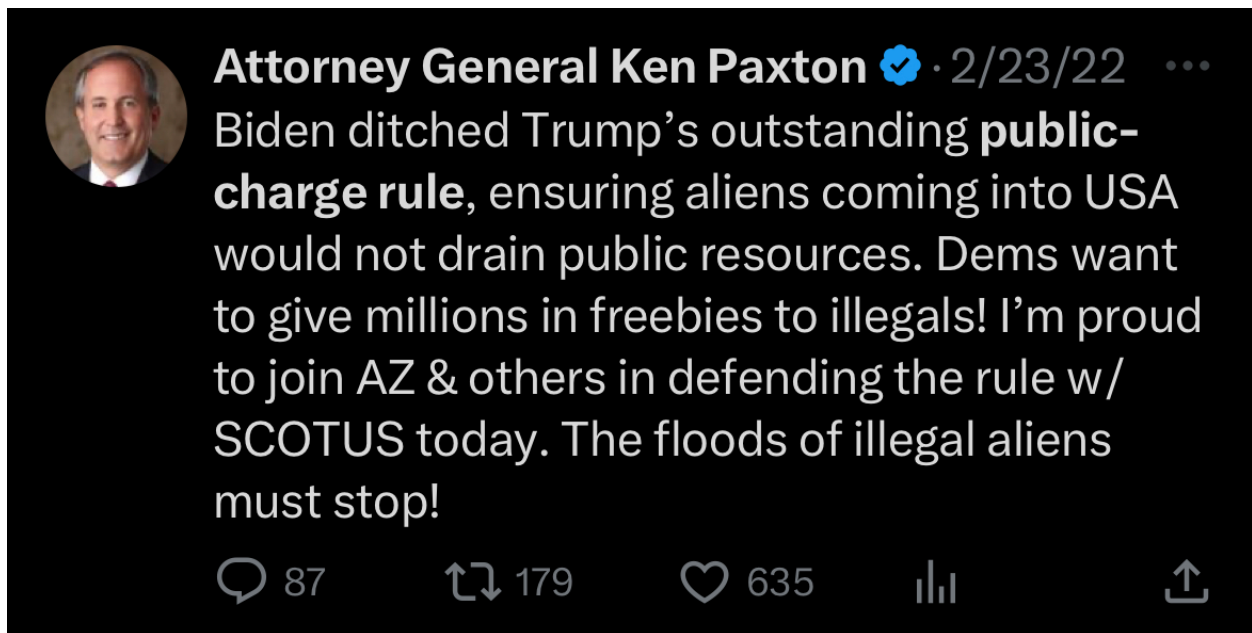


Fig. 3 Attorney General Ken Paxton's Tweet (2022)

First, he makes the claim regarding “millions in freebies.” Paxton is assumedly stating that millions of dollars are granted to migrants in public benefits. He notably does not use any evidence to support this claim. This omission likely is because the real numbers are less fear-inducing than the number he proposed. The average value of public benefits collected per migrant was around 6,000 dollars in 2020 (Nowrasteh & Howard, 2023). Of course, 6,000 dollars per migrant in the United States can quickly add up to millions of dollars, but the average value of benefits per migrant is still 27 percent less than the average value of benefits per native-born US American, which stood at roughly 8,300 dollars in 2020 (Nowrasteh & Howard, 2023). These numbers show that most public benefit money in 2020 went toward native-born citizens rather than migrants who were not born in the United States. Attorney General Paxton's wording constitutes a rhetorical effort to stir up fear in social media followers who may be worried about federal funding and tax money spending.

Second, continuing to analyze his specific wording, Paxton utilizes harmful rhetoric to describe migrants. He first refers to migrants as “aliens.” This is a common legal term for someone from a different country who is not a citizen of their current host country. Nonetheless, the term “alien” is a particularly dehumanizing way of describing migrants because in other contexts “alien” can be used to describe non-humans. The Attorney General also uses the term “illegals” to refer to migrants. The term “illegal” has been used frequently as an adjective to describe the documentation status of migrants, particularly in relation to those migrants in the United States without documentation (Flores, 2020). As an adjective, the term is typically phrased as “illegal immigrant” to describe an undocumented migrant person; however, the term has evolved to function as a pejorative noun. Attorney General Paxton uses the noun variation of

“illegal” to refer to undocumented migrants. Each variation of the term is harmful to migrants in the United States because they actively criminalize migrants. The noun variant, seen in Paxton’s post as the term “illegals,” is particularly harmful to migrants¹¹ because it reinforces notions of illegality or the idea that a person’s presence where they do not belong is illegal, and therefore their existence becomes illegal. Paxton continues to criminalize and dehumanize migrants in the same breath by referring to them as “illegal aliens.” Nonetheless, the Attorney General’s harmful rhetoric regarding migrants is only one facet of the vast misinformation and disinformation presented in his single Twitter post.

Third, in examining the claim that “illegals,” or undocumented migrants, are receiving “freebies” in the form of public benefits, Paxton’s most notable spread of false information emerges within this post. The Attorney General’s claim centers around the notion that undocumented migrants are eligible to receive benefits, but this claim is inaccurate because undocumented migrants are not qualified to enroll in most federal public benefit programs (Bernardo, 2022). Those migrants who do enroll in public benefits meet specific status requirements such as permanent residency. Paxton notably ends his post with the phrase, “The floods of illegal aliens must stop!” This sentence implies that vast amounts of migrants are entering the United States to receive public benefits.¹² Within this frame, the reality that people migrate for a myriad of reasons is overwhelmed by Attorney General Paxton’s post and assumptions that migrants who enter the United States are doing so purely to receive benefits.

¹¹ The rhetoric constituting Latinx migrants as “illegal aliens” is not just harmful to migrants but to anyone who meets the constructed requirements of a Latinx migrant, so any Latinx individual or even anyone who looks as if they could be Latinx can be subjected to this rhetorical violence (Chavez, 2008, p. 3).

¹² A study by J. David Cisneros found that racialized visuals and language that express flooding often are used in US news media to communicate the migrant “threat” (Cisneros, 2008).

Attorney General Paxton is not the only person who believes and spreads the notion that undocumented migrants enter the United States with the expectation of receiving federal benefits. The former Senior Advisor to President Donald Trump, Stephen Miller, shared and spread the same sentiment in a February 2022 Twitter post.

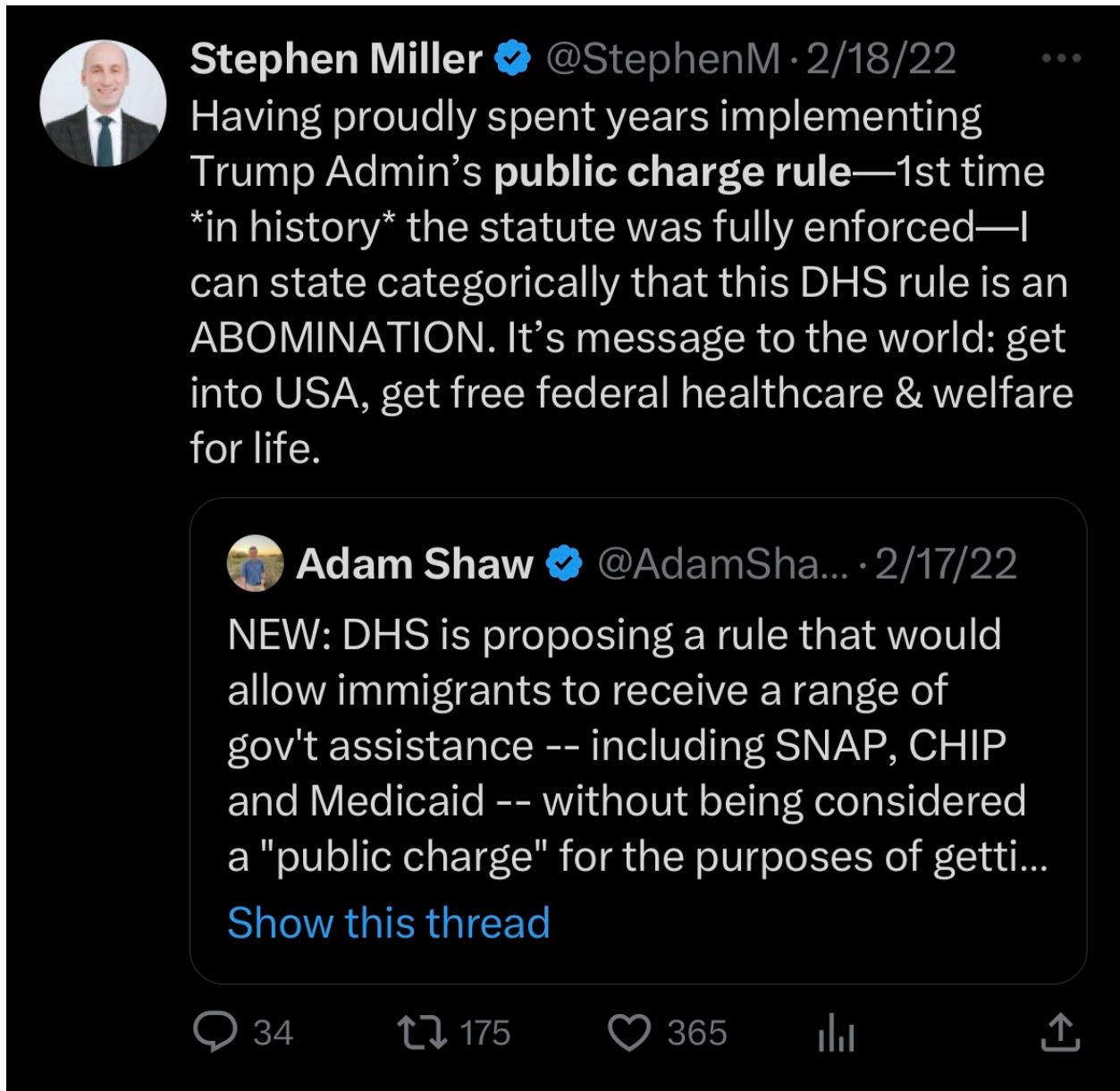


Fig. 4 Former Senior Advisor Stephen Miller’s Tweet (2022)

Miller’s post is a response to a political reporter for Fox News Adam Shaw’s announcement that the Trump-era 2019 Public Charge was unraveling and reversing under a

proposed rule change from the Department of Homeland Security under the Biden Administration. This rule change would allow migrants to receive certain public benefits without being considered a “public charge.” Miller shared strong sentiments that reversing the 2019 Public Charge Rule and allowing migrants to receive public benefits was an “abomination.” Furthermore, Miller’s last sentence spreads the same claim as Attorney General Paxton’s post by implying that anyone who enters the United States regardless of documentation status can receive federal benefits for life.

Proponents of the 2019 Public Charge Rule are communicating rhetoric that can create fear, spreading misinformation and disinformation, and perpetuating harmful rhetoric. The rhetoric relies on and contributes to the Latino Threat Narrative. As previously mentioned, the Latino Threat Narrative is a pervasive and damaging discourse that portrays Latinx people as a dangerous and criminal group (Chavez, 2008, p. 3), which fosters unfavorable stereotypes and fuels anti-migrant sentiment and policies. Using social media as the vessel for spreading such claims increases the visibility and circulation of the Latino Threat Narrative, prompting many individuals and groups to intervene in this cruel framing.

Though social media can often spread harmful discourses, many advocates for Latinx migrants have utilized social media as a powerful tool to resist harmful rhetoric. When the Latino Threat narrative circulates throughout social media, advocacy groups and individuals may often utilize the same social media platforms as their opponents to counter such discourses and disseminate their viewpoints. Advocates can thus raise awareness for their causes. These efforts include addressing and educating those directly affected by harmful discourses and policy decisions; denouncing xenophobic rhetoric used by politicians and the media; and emphasizing

the advantages of migration for the economy, thus deeming migrants as worthy and beneficial agents in bolstering societal values.¹³

Following the establishment of the 2019 Public Charge Rule, many advocates for Latinx migrants went to social media to express how the Rule particularly impacted Latinx migrants and other migrants of color. One example comes from Chispa, an advocacy group that recognizes itself as a political organizing home for young Latinx individuals in Orange County, California. Group members utilize both Instagram and Twitter to reach their target audiences. Characteristically, Chispa often communicates heavy messages regarding racism, xenophobia, and harm endured by the Latinx community during Donald Trump's presidency through memes or humorous images and texts. Chispa also works to uplift the voices of other advocacy groups by reposting their content. Members communicate news headlines locally and nationally that relate to their cause, and they often present information in easily digestible language for their audiences to bolster critical conversations around such topics.

¹³ It is worth noting the troubles that come with celebrating migrants for a narrow economic function rather than for their inherent values as human beings. Although the "Come Here" Narrative deems migrants valuable in advancing a capitalist economy, it can suggest that a migrant person's value is limited to their economic advantages rather than their human character.



Fig. 5 Chispa's Reposted Twitter Post on Instagram (2020)

In a 2020 post, Chispa directly associated the 2019 Public Charge Rule with migrants of color, suggesting the Rule was intentionally designed to keep such migrants of color out of the United States. The post above represents one way that Chispa utilizes simple language to convey greater meanings. Without revealing the intricacies of what the Public Charge Rule entails, the post implies that the Rule is particularly racist and xenophobic towards migrants of color. The use of simple language to convey this implication works to not conflate or confuse audiences with boundless information on a policy while pointing out the harmful aim of that policy. The

group also linked an NBC news article relating to the ruling so that individuals can learn more about the proposed Rule change if they choose.

The National Partnership for New Americans (NPNA) similarly pointed out the racist and xenophobic undertones of the Public Charge Rule in a February 2020 Instagram post but provided substantial information to support this claim. NPNA is a multiracial, multiethnic alliance of sixty of the biggest migrant rights organizations in the United States, with a presence in forty states. NPNA members promote migrant equality and inclusion at the state, local, and federal levels through service, advocacy, and policy initiatives that give migrant populations numerous chances to attain full civic, social, and economic justice.

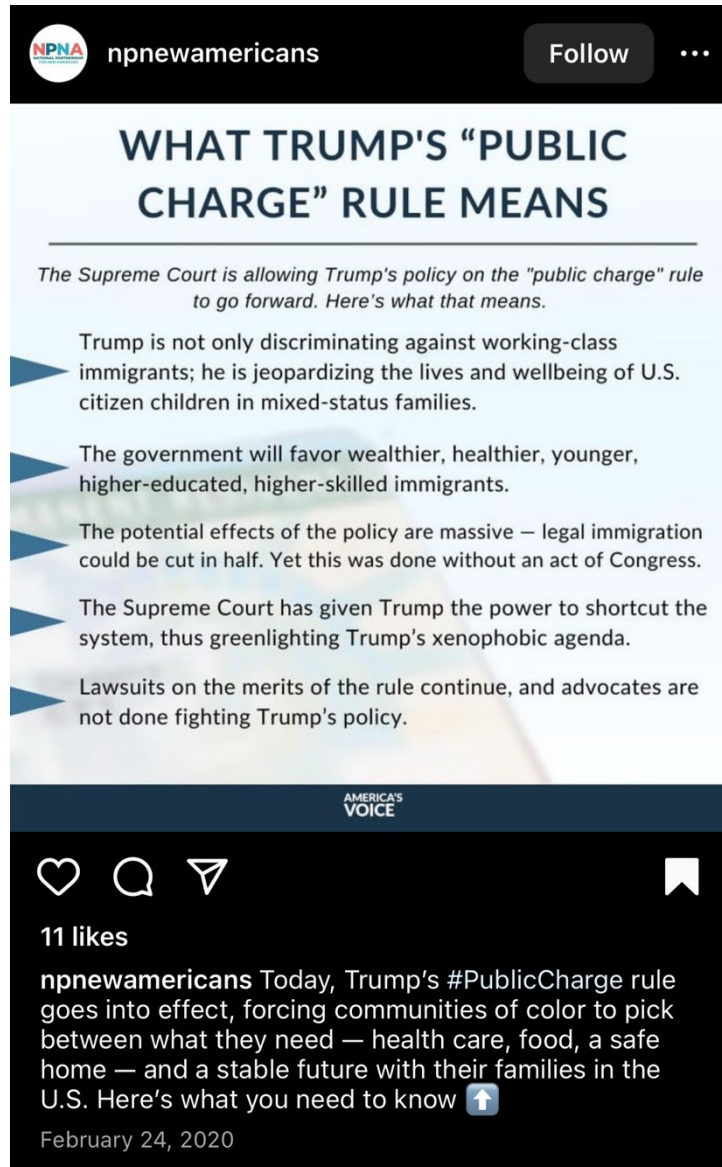


Fig. 6 The National Partnership for New Americans' Instagram Post (2020)

The post above addresses several flaws within the 2019 Public Charge Rule that act to discriminate against working-class migrants who are typically people of color. NPNA notes that the Rule would favor wealthier, higher-educated, and higher-skilled migrants. The post's caption also notes that the Rule would force communities of color to pick between their basic needs and maintaining a stable future in the United States with their families.

Similar to the post from Chispa, this post utilizes simple language to convey greater meanings, but it provides more information as supporting material. The information provided,

however, is not supported by accompanying news articles where users can learn more about the Rule, as seen in Chispa's post. Instead, the author of this post extrapolates deeper meanings from the 2019 Public Charge Rule, seemingly based on their own interpretations of the Rule and their understanding of the Trump Administration as particularly xenophobic.

Making claims on social media without supporting evidence can be both helpful and harmful. As examined in the previously discussed social media posts from proponents of the Public Charge Rule, claims that lack supporting evidence can be misleading and contribute to the spread of misinformation and disinformation. At the same time, individuals and organizations can express their opinions and thoughts freely without feeling the pressure of providing proof on social media. This flexibility can encourage open and honest dialogue bolstering productive discussions and the exchange of ideas. Although one could argue that the claims made in the social media posts from the Chispa and the NPNA require supporting evidence to legitimize their positions, I would suggest that the posts are not fully intended to convince or sway a certain opinion regarding the Public Charge Rule. Instead, they are meant to develop and foster a community for those who feel affected by the Public Charge Rule and their allies so they can experience safe spaces within social media landscapes.

In addition to Chispa and the NPNA, other groups and individuals expressed their support of migrants online, particularly Latinx migrants who may be affected by the perpetuation of the Latino Threat Narrative. These social media accounts and actors include Make the Road in New York and Krish O'Mara Vignarajah. Make the Road is an advocacy group that works to build and empower migrant and working-class communities in New York to achieve dignity and justice. To create real change, their model combines four key strategies: community organizing to change the systems and power structures affecting their communities; transformative

education to empower community members; legal and survival services to address issues of discrimination, abuse, and poverty; and policy innovation to rewrite unjust rules and make a democracy that is accountable to all regardless of race, class, gender identity, or immigration status.

Following the proposal for the 2019 Public Charge Rule change, the organization partnered with the Legal Aid Society and the Center for Constitutional Rights to sue over the Public Charge Rule recognizing the Rule as an attack on working-class migrants of color. The Legal Aid Society aims to ensure that everyone has access to justice through various legal practices. The Center for Constitutional Rights uses litigation, activism, and strategic communication to support communities under attack in their quest for justice and liberty. Since 1966, they have fought institutional racism, gender oppression, economic disparity, and political overreach as well as other repressive systems of power. Together, the three organizations worked to fight back against the Public Charge Rule, addressing their efforts on social media.



Fig. 7 Make the Road New York’s Instagram Post (2019)

Make the Road announced that they were suing the Trump Administration, along with the Legal Aid Society and the Center for Constitutional Rights, in a 2019 Instagram post. The group’s rhetoric begins with the phrase, “*No one* should have to choose between feeding their families and jeopardizing their future in the US.” The phrase functions as a unifying force to build community and provide support for those potentially affected by the proposed rule. The statement recognizes the challenging predicament faced by Latinx migrants who must balance

their immediate needs with their long-term aspirations. By advocating for the basic human right of food security and opposing policies that threaten the well-being of marginalized communities, the statement promotes a sense of belonging and solidarity among Latinx migrants. It also highlights the need for collective action and support to guarantee that everyone has access to basic necessities without sacrificing their future opportunities.

Krish O’Mara Vignarajah is another prominent figure who advocated for the rights of Latinx migrants and created a space for resistance as well as community on social media. Vignarajah is the CEO and founder of the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, the largest faith-based nonprofit dedicated to serving migrants who are targeted by oppressive power systems in the United States. Vignarajah’s post utilizes the same framing of the Public Charge Rule as Make the Road’s post—implicating that the rule creates predicaments in which migrants feel they need to choose between important necessities and living in the United States.



Fig. 8 Krish O’Mara Vignarajah’s Twitter Post in Response to Camilo Montoya-Galvez (2022)

The use of social media has become a powerful tool for Latinx migrant advocates; however, engagement on their posts seems relatively low when compared to that of their opponents. Analyzing data such as the number of likes, shares, and comments on a social media post can provide valuable insights into user interactions and engagement. For instance, the number of likes on a post can reveal the level of approval or agreement people share with the content of the post. Similarly, the number of shares or reposts of a post can indicate the perceived importance of the information and its potential reach to a wider audience. Comments on a post can also provide insights into any additional perspectives, opinions, and debates related to the content of the post.

Proponents of the 2019 Public Charge Rule typically had higher likes, shares, and comments on their posts that particularly utilized the Latino Threat Narrative than the posts of Latinx migrant advocates. Although the data associated with these posts are particularly high when compared to their advocate counterparts, we still must consider several factors that can contribute to these high numbers. First, we must consider the motivations for people to interact with these posts. Although we can assume that someone who likes a post is doing so because they enjoyed the content and therefore most likely agree with the claims made in the post, people tend to share and comment on posts for a variety of reasons. They can share their support of the post's content or to oppose and disagree with the content. Interestingly, most comments on the social media posts of those politicians who supported the 2019 Public Charge Rule were negative and argumentative, often highlighting that their views were limited and harmful to Latinx migrants. Second, we must remember how social media algorithms operate to prioritize content that is likely to generate engagement while suppressing content that is less likely to generate engagement. Therefore, those opinions that are particularly polarizing and controversial are more

likely to be shown across the social media feeds of those who both support and oppose the post's content. Lastly, social media engagement does not represent the entire US population. Although the data may not wholly represent mass attitudes toward Latinx migrants, it does seem that advocate voices are being underheard on social media, or at least are not as dominant as harmful and polarizing content.

Discussion

Throughout US history, the Latino Threat Narrative has existed simultaneously and paradoxically with the “Come Here” Narrative as seen in certain immigration policies. Although these two narratives often exist simultaneously, there have been points in time in which the Latino Threat Narrative supersedes the “Come Here” Narrative or overwhelms dominant discourses surrounding Latinx migrants in the United States. Most recently, updates to the country’s Public Charge Rule have amplified the Latino Threat Narrative among those who support former President Donald Trump’s 2019 Rule, which barred migrants from receiving residency statuses if they were likely to become a “public charge” at any point. The enactment of this 2019 Public Charge Rule and its subsequent reversal in 2022 significantly aligns with a point in time in which racism and xenophobia are tolerated and perpetuated through the social media accounts of several political figures.

At its most basic conception, the Latino Threat Narrative is a discourse that frames Latinx migrants, or anyone who meets the requirements of a Latinx migrant as an enemy of the United States (Chavez, 2008). Through social media, this narrative is made more visible and perpetuated through words, visuals, hashtags, and audience perception. The amplification of posts that support unfavorable stereotypes about Latinx individuals, such as depictions of undocumented migrants as “illegal aliens,” is one way that social media contributes to the Latino Threat Narrative. Additionally, social media algorithms may contribute to the visibility of the Latino Threat Narrative by highlighting content that generates the most engagement, which often includes sensationalized and derogatory comments about Latinx individuals.

Despite the prevalence of the Latino Threat Narrative on social media, such online social spheres can also act as a space for resistance for those disproportionately affected by this harmful

narrative. Latinx individuals and advocates can use social media to challenge negative portrayals and misinformation about their communities, share their own narratives and experiences, and mobilize support for social justice causes. The development of online communities that offer information and support to people impacted by the Latino Threat Narrative can also be facilitated through social media platforms, enabling those affected to connect with others who understand their struggles and experiences. Furthermore, social media can provide a platform for advocacy and activism to combat the adverse impacts of the Latino Threat Narrative. Latinx advocates can use social media to mobilize collective action and raise awareness about issues affecting their communities, such as immigration policies like the Public Charge Rule. Along with organizing for collective action, Latinx advocates can share histories surrounding migration that emphasized the “Come Here” Narrative, such as the enactment of the Bracero Program as a way to challenge the Latino Threat Narrative.

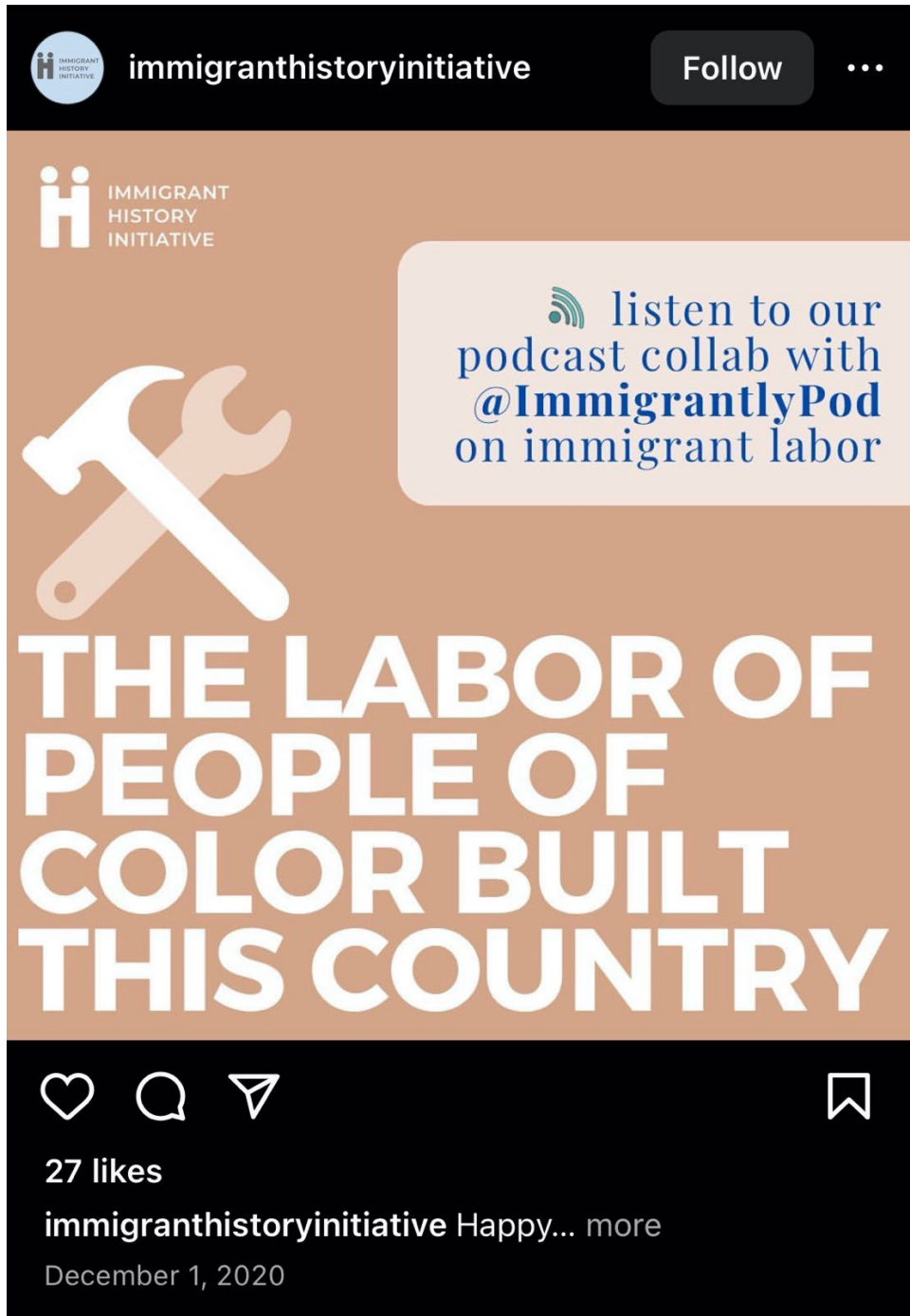


Fig. 9 Immigrant History Initiative's Instagram Post, "The Labor of People of Color Built This Country" (2020)



Fig. 10 American History Museum's Instagram Post (2020)

amhistorymuseum The Bracero program tells a story of both exploitation and opportunity.

In 1942, facing labor shortages caused by WWII, the U.S. made a series of agreements with Mexico to recruit Mexican men to work on U.S. farms and railroads. This agreement became known as the "Bracero" program, a Mexican term for a manual laborer.

With the motivation of reducing costs, many farmers saw the braceros as a source of cheap labor. Braceros faced poor housing conditions, disputes over pay, discrimination, and inadequate healthcare. But many braceros endured this grueling work and harsh conditions, hoping to make more money than they could at home. The program affected communities across the United States. Some towns embraced the culture of these men, while others discriminated against them. Many braceros never returned to Mexico, and some married local women and started new families in the United States.

#HispanicHeritageMonth

Fig. 11 American History Museum's Instagram Post – Caption (2020)

The Bracero Program, a guest worker program that brought millions of Mexican laborers to the United States between 1942 and 1964 (Mandee, 2014), is often invoked in discussions about immigration policy and the Latino Threat Narrative on social media. The program's history offers crucial context for comprehending the economic and social causes for migration from Mexico to the United States and serves as a reminder of the considerable economic

contributions Mexican workers have made to the US economy over time. By engaging in discussions about the Bracero Program, social media users can challenge the idea that Latinx migrants are a threat to US American society and instead highlight the ways in which they have helped to build and sustain it.

By examining the historical roots of migration from Latin America to the United States, we can move beyond simplistic and divisive narratives and work toward policies that are fair, just, and respectful of the dignity of all people. Although the Bracero Program was controversial due to its exploitative nature with workers often being paid low wages and subjected to poor living conditions, discussions around the program from Latinx migrant advocates as a combative strategy to resist the amplified Latino Threat Narrative on social media has had a tangible impact, such as the enactment of Oregon House Bill 2955 designating August 4th as Bracero Program Day. This bill serves to recognize and honor the contributions of Mexican migrant workers and to push back against the negative stereotypes perpetuated by the Latino Threat Narrative.

Future research should continue to evaluate the history of US immigration policies in creating and countering certain discourses about Latinx migrants, such as the “Come Here” and Latino Treat Narratives, to deepen our understanding of the impact that these discourses have on social attitudes and policy decisions. In particular, analyzing the Biden Administration which, despite campaign promises to create a more humane and fair immigration system, has continued to perpetuate the Latino Threat Narrative by enacting policies similar to the Trump Administration. For example, the administration has opened processing centers where migrants would have to request permission to come to the United States, barring them from seeking relief at the U.S./Mexico border (Democracy Now, 2023). Additionally, the administration has doubled

down on rapid deportation, continuing to prioritize enforcement and hyper-militarization of border spaces (Democracy Now, 2023). These policies have been met with criticism from migrant rights activists and advocates, who argue the Biden Administration perpetuates the harmful narrative that migrants, particularly Latinx migrants, are a threat to the United States.

Continuing to utilize social media as a tool for discerning how these narratives continue to circulate in modern discourses about Latinx migrants should also be considered. Social media algorithms have been shown to amplify sensationalized and often derogatory narratives surrounding Latinx migrants, contributing to the spread of the Latino Threat Narrative and other negative discourses. Research could examine precisely how these algorithms work, the role they play in shaping public opinion, and the ways in which they can be reformed or transformed to mitigate their harmful effects. Additionally, as a result of social media algorithms promoting sensationalized and often negative posts, the posts of Latinx migrant advocates can often be diminished. Future research should thus explore how positive narratives about Latinx migrants can be amplified on social media platforms and how they can be used to challenge negative narratives. Understanding the role of social media in shaping public opinion is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat harmful narratives and promote more justice-oriented attitudes toward Latinx migrants.

Conclusion

Although social media algorithms seem to play a significant role in which posts are amplified and which posts are suppressed, often resulting in harmful posts about Latinx migrants being promoted and the posts of their advocates being deprioritized, there are several ways that individual social media users can work towards lifting and supporting the voices of Latinx migrant advocates on social media. Finding and following Latinx migrant advocates on various social media networks, such as Twitter and Instagram, is an essential first step in promoting these voices. By doing so, users can magnify their messages and contribute to increasing their reach and impact. Engaging with advocates on social media by liking, commenting on, and sharing their posts with our own networks is another crucial way of supporting these groups. These acts not only contribute to the broader dissemination of their message but also demonstrate solidarity and support for their cause. One can even work to elevate the voices of Latinx migrant advocates by actively seeking out opportunities to collaborate with them and offer support.

We must also disengage with harmful posts and those who perpetuate them without overlooking their existence. Users should be aware of the harmful stereotypes that are spread through misinformation and disinformation on social media, but one must not engage with them by liking, reposting, or commenting so as to limit the likelihood that they will reach further audiences as a result of social media algorithms that boost posts with high engagement rates. Ultimately, by taking these actions, users can help to ensure that the voices of Latinx migrant advocates are heard and valued on social media and that their important work towards justice and equity for migrant communities is supported and uplifted. Overall, social media plays a complex role in perpetuating and challenging certain discourses such as the “Come Here” and Latino Threat Narratives. While it can amplify negative stereotypes and misinformation about Latinx

individuals, it can also serve as a space for resistance and advocacy. By critically engaging with social media and actively working to amplify the voices of those affected by the Latino Threat Narrative, we can work toward a more just and equitable society.

Bibliography

- A former “bracero” feels seen with new statue honoring immigrant labor’s hidden history.* (n.d.). NBC News. Retrieved November 25, 2022, from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/new-bracero-monument-highlights-immigrant-labor-program-s-hidden-history-n1060821>
- Beliso-De Jesús, A. M. (2020). The jungle academy: Molding white supremacy in american police recruits. *American Anthropologist*, 122(1), 143–156. <https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13357>
- Bernardo, R. (2022, December 3). *What was the public charge rule for immigrants?* Boundless. <https://www.boundless.com/blog/public-charge-rule-explained/>
- Bicckerton, M. (2000). Prospects for a bilateral immigration agreement with Mexico: Lessons from the Bracero program. *Texas Law Review*, 79(4), 24.
- Burnett, C., & Merchant, G. (2011). Is there a space for critical literacy in the context of social media? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 10(1), 41–57. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ935562>
- Castro, J., & Picq, M. L. (2017). Stateness as landgrab: A political history of maya dispossession in guatemala. *American Quarterly*, 69(4), 791–799. <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2017.0065>
- Caulfield, J. (2019, November 8). *Textual analysis | guide, 3 approaches & examples.* Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/textual-analysis/>
- Chavez, L. (2008). *The Latino Threat: Constructing immigrants, citizens, and the nation.* Stanford University Press.
- Chávez, K. R. (2013). *Queer migration politics: Activist rhetoric and coalitional possibilities.* University of Illinois.
- Cisneros, J.D. (2008). Contaminated communities: The metaphor of “immigrant as pollutant” in media representations of immigration. *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 11(4), 569–601. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rap.0.0068>
- De Genova, N. P. (2002). Migrant “illegality” and deportability in everyday life. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31(1), 419–447. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.040402.085432>
- Democracy Now! (2023, Apr.) *U. S. Plans migrant processing centers in latin america and rapid deportations from southern border.* https://www.democracynow.org/2023/4/28/headlines/us_plans_migrant_processing_centers_in_latin_america_and_rapid_deportations_from_southern_border
- Federal Register 28689, Sec. 1, 1999

Federal Register 41292, sec. 1, A

Flores, L. A. (2020). *Deportable and disposable: Public rhetoric and the making of the “illegal” immigrant*. The Pennsylvania State University Press.

Flores-Yeffal, N. Y., Vidales, G., & Plemons, A. (2011). The latino cyber-moral panic process in the united states. *Information, Communication & Society*, 14(4), 568–589.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2011.562222>

Garrity, K. (n.d.). *DHS unwinds Trump-era “public charge” rule for immigrants*. POLITICO. Retrieved November 25, 2022, from <https://www.politico.com/news/2022/09/08/trump-public-charge-rule-immigrants-biden-00055505>

Goodman, A. (2020, June 23). *How 1970s u. S. Immigration policy put mexican migrants at the center of a system of mass expulsion*. Time. <https://time.com/5858164/voluntary-deportation-history/>

Holmes, S. M. (2007). “Oaxacans like to work bent over”: The naturalization of social suffering among berry farm workers. *International Migration*, 45(3), 39–68.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2435.2007.00410.x>

Holmes, S. M. (2013). *Fresh fruit, broken bodies: Migrant farmworkers in the United States*. University of California Press.

Home. (n.d.-a). Partnership for New Americans. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://partnershipfornewamericans.org/>

Home. (n.d.-b). Chispa. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://www.chispaoc.org/>

Immigration Act of 1882, ch. 376, § 2

Immigration Act of 1891, ch. 551, § 1, 26 Stat. 1084, 1084

Make the road new york | se hace camino nueva york. (n.d.). Make the Road New York. Retrieved May 3, 2023, from <https://maketheroadny.org/>

Mandeel, E. (2001). The Bracero Program 1942-1964 . *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(1), 171–184.

Massey, D. S., & Pren, K. A. (2012). Unintended consequences of us immigration policy: Explaining the post-1965 surge from latin america. *Population and Development Review*, 38(1), 1–29. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3407978/>

Nowrasteh, A., & Howard, M. (2023). *Immigrant and Native Consumption of Means-Tested Welfare and Entitlement Benefits in 2020*. CATO Institute. <https://www.cato.org/briefing-paper/immigrant-native-consumption-means-tested-welfare-entitlement-benefits-2020>

- Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the united states* (Third edition). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Pariser, E. (2011). *The filter bubble: What the Internet is hiding from you*. Penguin Press.
- Plumer, B. (2013). Congress tried to fix immigration back in 1986. Why did it fail? *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2013/01/30/in-1986-congress-tried-to-solve-immigration-why-didnt-it-work/>
- Sifuentez, M. J. (2016). *Of forests and fields: Mexican labor in the Pacific Northwest*. Rutgers University Press.
- Thurber, D. (n.d.-a). *Research guides: A latinx resource guide: civil rights cases and events in the united states: 1986: immigration reform and control act of 1986* [Research guide]. Retrieved May 3, 2023, from <https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/irca>
- Thurber, D. (n.d.-b). *Research guides: A latinx resource guide: civil rights cases and events in the united states: 1994: california's proposition 187* [Research guide]. Retrieved May 3, 2023, from <https://guides.loc.gov/latinx-civil-rights/california-proposition-187>