LATINO AMERICANS

Identity, Immigration and Economics:
The Involuntary Deportations of the 1930s
(For use with Episode 2)

Lesson Overview

This particular lesson examines the involuntary deportations of Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage during the 1930s. This displacement is only one of many legally sanctioned, forced relocations in our nation's history. It also is an example of how a certain population may be scapegoated during times of economic downturn — and how there is an ongoing tie between immigration policies on the one hand, and economic trends on the other. Students analyze primary accounts and images from the 1930s, develop new vocabulary related to relocation, and demonstrate their understanding through creative writing. (Elements of this lesson were adapted from http://www.learnnc.org/lp/pages/4042.)

Grade Level: 7 – 12

Time: 2 – 3 Hours (1 – 2 class periods)

Materials

- Internet access for research and viewing segment (*Los Angeles Deportation*)
- Copies of student handout, **Involuntary Deportation Images and Writing Prompts**
- Paper and pencils for note-taking and assignment writing/completion
- Dictionary (print or online)

Lesson Objectives

The student will:
1. Define and discuss the difference between immigration, repatriation, deportation, resettlement and internment.
2. Identify the deportation of documented Mexican immigrants and Mexican Americans during the Great Depression.
3. Present her/his learning to the class in the form of a vivid description of the individuals being deported and participate in a class debate on reasons for and against deportation.
4. Understand the importance and significance of the involuntary deportations of the 1930s.
5. Analyze the deportations in the context of immigration policies as connected to economic factors.

6. Develop research and writing skills for locating and analyzing information.

Lesson Procedure

Optional Experiential "Hook"
This activity puts students in the position of being pitted against each other for scarce resources and then having a subset eliminated from the equation based on an inherent characteristic, rather than any action, right or attitude of their own. The example below is based on "Musical Chairs" but countless variations could be made, based on some type of "scarce resource" such as seating, a special snack, etc.

- Have a set of chairs set up for "Musical Chairs" when students enter the room. Each chair should be labeled "Job."
- At first, choose a group of students that is smaller than the number of chairs.
- Have the students play Musical Chairs by walking around the chairs while music is played. When the music stops, each student finds a chair and is "paid" (with a token, a treat, a penny, etc. — anything that symbolizes payment).
- Point out that not all the jobs are getting done and that more workers are needed.
- Bring in more "workers" from the rest of the class that is watching. Work up to enough students to fill all the chairs. Continue the cycle of walking/music and providing "payment" to each participant for at least one or two cycles.
- Announce that the economy has taken a turn for the worse and remove enough chairs that two or three students will not be able to sit when the music stops. Don't take them out of the game, but make it clear to all that they are not getting their "payment."
- Take a few more chairs out.
- Cycle again.
- Announce that the government has determined a policy to make sure that more "workers" have a "job." Then choose some uncontrollable factor to determine who stays in the game and who gets the boot. IMPORTANT: The factor should be something uncontrollable like eye color, type of shoes, etc., that pulls some of the students who were in the game from the beginning and some of those brought in later (to represent the idea of native-born and immigrants being affected). The characteristic should be clear to all playing and observing.
- Make sure the players who are sent out get a clear message. Don't just send them back to their seats in the class. Have them gather their belongings and go to a particular corner of the room. (It should be a clear sanction, but still playful.)
- Continue one or two more cycles of music and "payment."

Discuss the game with the participants and the class:

- How did it feel to get paid for your "job"?
- How did it feel when suddenly there weren't enough "jobs" for everyone and you stood there empty-handed while others got paid?
- What were some of the reactions from the class to this change?
- What was your reaction when you realized that some people were being eliminated from a chance to work — and even from the game "community" itself — based on a characteristic they could not control?
- Imagine it wasn't a game; it was real. How would you respond?

- In your opinion, what are the take-away lessons from this activity?

Pre-activity:
Introduce the topic by discussing with students what it feels like to move away from home. In discussion or through individual writing prompts, ask questions about moving, including:
- Have you ever moved?
- Where did you move?
- Did you want to move?
- What would happen if you were forced to move?
- Did you know anyone when you got there?
- What was it like in the new place?

Students will write about the experience of moving and how they felt about it. If students have never moved away from a home, have them write about the experience of someone they've known who has moved. Hear student responses.

Video Analysis:
View the video segment on the experience of Emilia Castañeda, one of the hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants and Mexican American U.S. citizens who were involuntarily deported to Mexico during the Depression. In small groups of 4 – 6, students will discuss the following questions and respond to the following questions. (Responses to questions can be oral or written, according to teacher preference.)

- Describe the life of Emilia and her family in Los Angeles.
- Explain what happened to Emilia's family during the Great Depression. Where did they go and what led them there? Was it by choice?
- What was the U.S. government policy that swept up Emilia and her family?
- How many were effected overall? What types of people were targeted?
- What economic factors fueled such a policy?
- Describe the tactics that the government used to transfer individuals and families of Mexican heritage out of the United States.
- In what ways was this policy a violation of law and of the rights of citizenship?
- Use a dictionary to define the following terms. Which ones are most applicable to the experience of Emilia and the others who were sent to Mexico during the Depression?
  - Resettlement
  - Deportation
  - Internment
  - Immigration
  - Repatriation

Historic Images and Creative Writing:
In the second activity, students step into the experience of 1930s deportees by reviewing historic images and demonstrating understanding of key concepts through creative writing.

In advance of the activity, consider assigning each group additional research through the following sources:

- http://www.pewhispanic.org/2011/12/28/iii-awareness-and-views-of-immigrant-deportations/
- http://www.pewhispanic.org/2010/10/28/iii-discrimination-deportation-detainment-and-satisfaction/
- http://www.pbs.org/opb/historydetectives/feature/mexican-americans/
- http://www.pbs.org/itvs/thecity/resources1_5.html
- http://www.pbs.org/itvs/beyondtheborder/story.html
- http://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu
- http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/mexican6.html
- Decade of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation in the 1930s by Francisco Balderrama and Raymond Rodriguez

Have students select two historical pictures and complete the **Involuntary Deportation Images and Writing Prompts**. Students can work individually or together on this activity. The teacher can select a picture for students or they can select on their own. Students are to do the following:

1. Title each picture with a unique name (title).
2. Give themselves a unique name as someone in the picture.
3. Describe the role of their character in the picture.
4. Use understanding of the involuntary deportations to creatively narrate the thoughts, emotions and situation of the characters in the image.

Lesson Closure
Discussion: Teachers are encouraged to pull articles or media related to the current debate over immigration and compare and contrast the events of the 1930s with the situation today. What is similar or different? Particular attention should be given to the question of "What happens with immigration policies and attitudes during times of economic hardship?" How do the events of the Great Depression inform our understanding of the upswing in anti-immigration legislation during the recession that gained speed in 2008? How is the situation of today different?

Writing: In a short essay, students should clarify which terms addressed above best fit the events in question.

Prompt:

- Resettlement
- Deportation
- Internment
- Immigration
- Repatriation

Which of these terms best apply in describing what happened to hundreds of thousands of Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage in the 1930s? Use examples from video segments and historic images or texts to support your argument. How does this historical chapter relate to other events in the nation's past? What comparisons and contrasts can be

made to the current climate of economic recession and attitudes and policies toward immigrants and their communities?

Assessment: Essays can be assessed using the Common Core English Language Arts Standards for Social Studies. In terms of content, a key concept of the lesson is an understanding of the fact that both Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican heritage were caught up in the deportations, making the term "repatriation" problematic. Connecting this historical chapter to similar events (forced relocations of Native Americans, internment of Japanese Americans) and understanding that attitudes and policies toward immigration are closely tied to economic questions are highly valued.
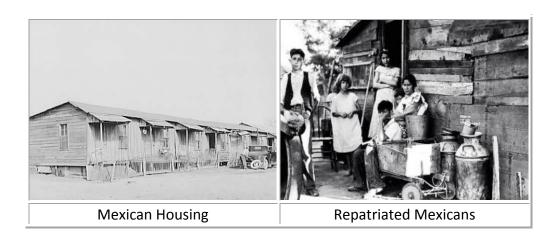
Critical vocabulary:
According to Merriam-Webster online dictionary:
- **repatriate**—to restore or return to the country of origin, allegiance
- **deportation**—the removal from a country of an alien whose presence is unlawful or prejudicial
- **internment**—to confine or impound especially during a war
- **immigration**—to come into a country of which one is not a native for permanent residence
- **resettlement**—the act of bestowing or giving possession again under legal sanction

Involuntary Deportation Images and Writing Prompts

Examine the following pictures. How do they underscore what you have already learned about involuntary deportations of Mexican immigrants and U.S. citizens of Mexican American heritage? After reviewing the photos, use your understanding of the topic and your creativity to invent identities for the subjects in the images and a credible "backstory." Use the prompts below and the accompanying form.

1. Title each picture with a unique name (title).
2. Give yourself a unique name as someone in the picture.
3. Describe the role of your character in the picture.
4. Creatively narrate the thoughts, emotions and situation of the characters in the image.

Mexican Housing

Repatriated Mexicans

Repatriation Train

Train Station Filled with Repatriated Mexicans

| Father and Son Working in California Agriculture | Mexican Americans in Salinas Valley |

| U.S. Soldiers Rounding Up Mexican Americans | Mexicans Held at Elysian Park (L.A.) Stockyard |

| Mexican Family Voluntarily Repatriating | Repatriated Woman after Arriving in Mexico |

Source: http://public.csusm.edu/frame004/images.html — California State University, San Marcos, 2009, Craig S. Frame.

Title of Picture:

Name:

Role:

Narrative Account: 1-2 Paragraphs