

# Migrant Latinx Childhood in Mid- and Late-Twentieth Century America

Dr. Ivón Padilla-Rodríguez

Bridge to Faculty Postdoctoral Research Associate

University of Illinois Chicago

History Department



Braceros working in the fields, circa 1950s



Braceros waving goodbye to their wives and children



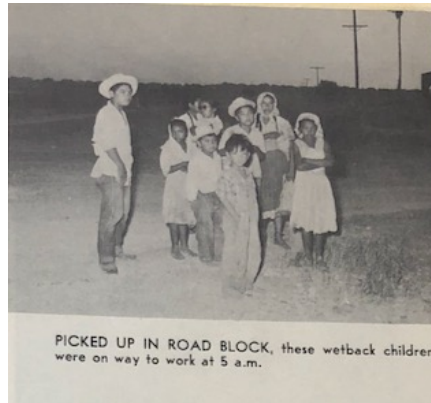
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14-year-old undocumented teen laborer, Eulalio Luna, being interviewed by a Border Patrol agent before being deported to Mexico



PICKED UP IN ROAD BLOCK, these wetback children were on way to work at 5 a.m.

# Los Angeles Times

One Day on the Border

## Millions Drawn to El Norte by Dream

From Times Staff Writers

Every day near sunset, hopeful Mexicans gather in the thickets near Reynosa in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Mexico, in the railyards of Ciudad Juarez and in the barrios near Tijuana. They wait and watch for the proper moment to dash across the border to the United States, *El Norte*.

And each day legions of U.S. Border Patrol agents, some on horseback, some in airplanes, some on foot, are fielded for the predictably imbalanced contest of stopping them.

"We expect them to be there," says Border Patrol supervisory agent Wayne Kirkpatrick, who patrols the busiest sector of the border, near Chula Vista. "They know we're here. They outnumber us, and we catch as many as we can." He gazes down at a gathering mass of Mexicans waiting for nightfall. "I wonder if this is the way General Custer felt at the Little Big Horn, seeing the Sioux come up."

It is an apt comparison. The fragile, 1,933-mile boundary from San Ysidro, Calif., to Boca Chica, Tex., is the world's longest and least-guarded border between a rich, industrialized nation and a poor, developing one.

And more Mexican citizens than ever before are crossing it illegally. They are lured by jobs, education, and the opportunity for a better future and pushed by Mexico's deteriorating economy.

In the 12 months that ended Oct. 1, 1983, the U.S. government apprehended a record 1,078,468 illegal aliens from Mexico. In the next three months, another 366,696 illegals were caught—a surge that, if continued, would see this year's apprehensions exceed last year's.

already living in the United States and would penalize employers for hiring illegals. Meanwhile, the nation's true immigration policy is determined moment by moment, mile by mile, along the border.

To chronicle one day of that reality, The Times deployed a team of nine reporters and four photographers for 24 hours along the border, in Mexican villages, on border-bound buses and in the barrios of Los Angeles and other Southwest cities. This is their report of one day on the border, from late Sunday, March 18, to late Monday, March 19:

### 4 p.m. Sunday. A New American, San Juan, Tex.

Dusk on the border approaches with the dawning of a new American life.

Juana Maria Prado, her husband, Roberto, and their 3-year-old daughter, Edith, residents of Reynosa, Mexico, climbed into the family's aging red Chevrolet Vega GT early this morning and began driving toward the international bridge that crosses the Rio Grande. Brandishing a 72-hour visitor's pass issued to Mexicans for shopping trips, they had crossed the bridge, fenced and laced with concertina wire, into the United States. Their



ROSEMARY KATL / Los Angeles Times

**Vigilant** -After crossing Rio Grande, illegal alien watches for Border Patrol as he climbs through fence on way to work in El Paso.

# Youths, Families See U.S. as Only Hope, Swell Alien Arrests

By PATRICK McDONNELI Times Staff Writer



**ROBBED, ROUNDED UP** -A young illegal immigrant sits in a Border Patrol wagon near the San Ysidro border after he was robbed by Mexican gunmen while trying to cross into the United States.



CRIME AND JUSTICE JULY/AUGUST 2014 ISSUE

## 70,000 Kids Will Show Up Alone at Our Border This Year. What Happens to Them?

*Officials have been stunned by a “surge” of unaccompanied children crossing into the United States.*



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## The Trump administration’s separation of families at the border, explained

Why children are being sent to “foster care or whatever” while their parents are sent to jail.

By Dara Lind | [dara@vox.com](mailto:dara@vox.com) | Updated Aug 14, 2018, 1:29pm EDT



# The Rights of "Modern" Childhood

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Right to

1. Safety
2. Familial integrity
3. Protection from prolonged incarceration or incarceration in adult sites of confinement



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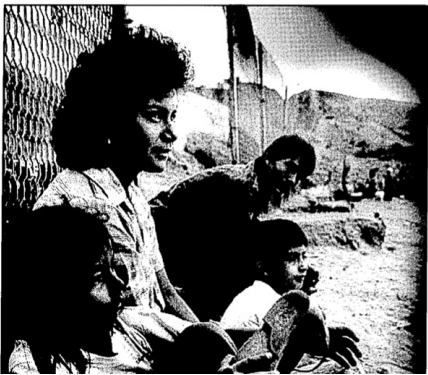
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4. Protection from labor exploitation
5. Educational access

# Migrant Child Detention, Deportation, & Family Separation



## *El Norte* Luring More Families

Growing Numbers of Women, Children Risk Perils of Border Crossing for Better Life

By PATRICK Mc DONNELL  
TIMES STAFF WRITER

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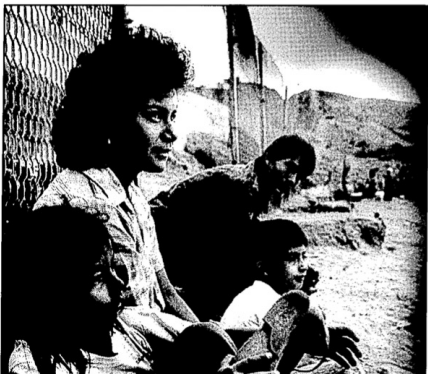
14 Part I—Mon., Sept. 4, 1978

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Children are separated from parents, finger-printed and treated like criminals by police and prison authorities. Para Rosa Rivas told the Mexican daily paper *Excelsior* recently she was detained as a witness against a "coyote" she had never seen, and her two children (one six, the other just a year old) were taken from her and imprisoned.

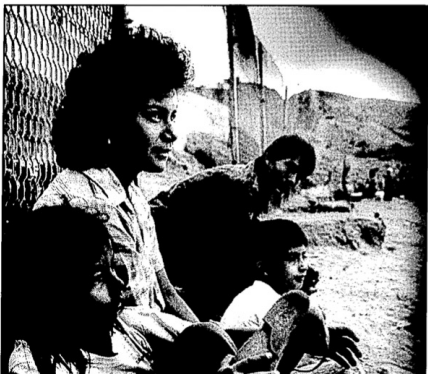
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**NEW ARRIVALS**

BACK TO MEXICO  
Undocumented alien minors get a last look at the U.S. before deportation.

**Juveniles return to Mexico with smiles**

By Vicki Torres  
Times Staff Writer

Pub. 15 after he signed a waiver forfeiting his right to a deportation hearing.

Photo photo by Bob D'Amico

Alma Elizola, chief patrol agent of the Chula Vista border station.



It's true that they haven't committed any crime in Mexico. We recognize everyone's right to attempt to better their lives by crossing the border . . . But they might face greater danger on the streets.

Daniel Romero Mejia  
Head of Tijuana juvenile jail

## Migrant Youths Face Trip to Crowded Tijuana Jail

Tales of Beatings, Torture, Fights Greet Minors Returned by Border Patrol

By PATRICK Mc DONNELL, Times Staff Writer

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# Migrant Child Labor





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"All the News  
That's Fit to Print"

## The New York Times

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NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 19, 1980

\$1.25 beyond 50-mile zone from New York City  
Higher in air delivery cities

### Thousands of Aliens Held In Virtual Slavery in U.S.



### Charge Farmer Held Mexicans in Slavery

By BERNARD LEFKOWITZ

One of the hazards of running a chicken farm, says Rabbi David I. Shackney of Middlefield, Conn., is that the help is usually temporary and unreliable. This was particularly true of a Mexican family of seven who worked on his farm until recently, Shackney said today. "They couldn't do the job so I kicked them off the farm."

A federal grand jury, meeting in Hartford, has a different view of Shackney's labor problems. In a nine-count indictment filed against the Middlefield chicken farmer, the jury charged that Shackney enslaved Louis Humberto Oros, 4, his wife, and their five children for nearly a year.

"It's the same thing as slavery," Asst. U. S. Attorney James D. O'Connor said in Hartford yesterday.

O'Connor said this was the

first time in this century that the Hartford U. S. Attorney's office had prosecuted a charge of involuntary servitude.

Shackney denied the charges categorically. He said he had no knowledge that a grand jury was convening in Hartford to hear the case. And he maintained that he has not been informed of the indictment.

"They never asked me to tell my side," Shackney continued. "The man and his family didn't

work out so I got rid of them. They would have liked to stay.

"This is all ridiculous. I don't know what they are talking about."

Federal officials testified that Shackney, on vacation in Mexico City, met Oros and persuaded him to come to his farm last July with his wife, Virginia Espina, 43, and their five children, ranging in age from 8 to 18.

Oros, who was a taxi driver in Mexico City, was on the farm several months when a relative tried to reach him, an FBI agent told the grand jury.

# Migrant Children's Access to Education

## Town in Illinois Educates Migrant Children—and Itself

### Gradual Change in Attitudes

By Louisa R. Shattuck

Special to The Chronicle-Herald

Everybody in Hoopston knows about Amado Martinez. If you saw Amado, you would wonder how a 15-year-old with the soft speech and gentle smile that makes him a center of interest in a town of 6,000.

"He's a freshman in John Greer High School, that's what," a Hoopstonite will tell you. "And that's new. Big news. First one of these Texas migrants we've ever had in our high school. Came up with his folks this spring to stay separate. Winter, Amado lives down in Starr County in Texas. In between cotton picking he goes to school; finishes all eight grades. He comes up here and goes right into regular classes in our high school along with our kids. Does right well, too, the teachers say. Goes to the freshman party and has a fine time."

Maybe you think it strange that Hoopston should be so excited so proud about Amado and about a other 13 Texas Mexicans who attended its elementary schools for 26 days last May. Isn't this a "se country"? And isn't public opinion one of those rights we see for granted in democratic societies? Well, it wasn't always so in Hoopston, Ill.

### Increased by Rails

Justy-nine miles south from a Michigan and nine miles to the Indiana border, a gray tower on stilts rises from level fertile fields to tell you here you are in Hoopston. A ray through the town the Chicago & Eastern intersects the east-west line of the Nickel Plate, dividing the town into four parts. The southeast quarter, plenty

the west near the Lincoln School —food machinery and farm equipment, grain and lumber and coal, a bottling plant and iron works. But most important to this story are the two big canneries.

### Native-Born Workers

For out there in Vermillion County, the "sweet-corn capital of the world," these two canning companies raise their own snap peas and tomatoes and corn to process in their factories. When spring comes and right on through the summer, they need a lot of hands for harvest. During the war years they ran short of local labor, and they found the answer in prisoners of war. Along in 1948, the prisoners were sent back to Germany, and again there weren't enough local workers who wanted seasonal jobs in the fields. Following the lead of growers in Michigan and Minnesota, the companies brought in Spanish-speaking families from the southwest and housed them in the prisoners' barracks and a giant Quonset hut.

Most of these Latin-American families never had even been to Mexico; they were native-born American citizens, some for three and four generations back. But they had brown skins; they understood little English and spoke less.

In a town where a "foreigner" is a man from Kentucky, these were foreigners indeed.

Hoopston raised its eyebrows and locked its doors; it put up signs. When the migrants went to the movies, a sign and an usher sent them to the balcony; when they went to the park, they sat in a special place marked off, and they didn't go to the swimming pool at all.

### Barriers Come Down

Today all that is changed. On



"We use the same textbooks in Texas as we do in Illinois" might be the caption of this photo, taken in Hoopston, Ill., of two Spanish-speaking migrant children.

triflingly concern of many. What has made the difference?

Ask that question of a dozen persons and you get a dozen answers, all different and all part of the story.

Some mention one person or another as being responsible. Mr. Fish and Mr. Bergstrom, personnel

### Good Customers

"The businessmen began to that when crops were run good, these people have money to spend. The Chronicle-Herald, an editorial leading off with: 'Learn 50 words of Sp and Increase Your Business

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The New York Times

EXCERPTS FROM SUPREME COURT'S OPINIONS ON THE EDUCATION OF ILLEGAL

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The Lopez family was featured on NBC news after the Supreme Court ruled in their favor. Alfredo Lopez is in the white shirt, sitting next to his mother, Lidia Lopez. NBC News

# Upending Age Hierarchies and Subverting Expectations

The New York Times  
September 18, 1962  
**MEXICAN GIRL HEADS  
CREW OF LABORERS**

Part I—Tues., Apr. 10, 1979 **Los Angeles Times**

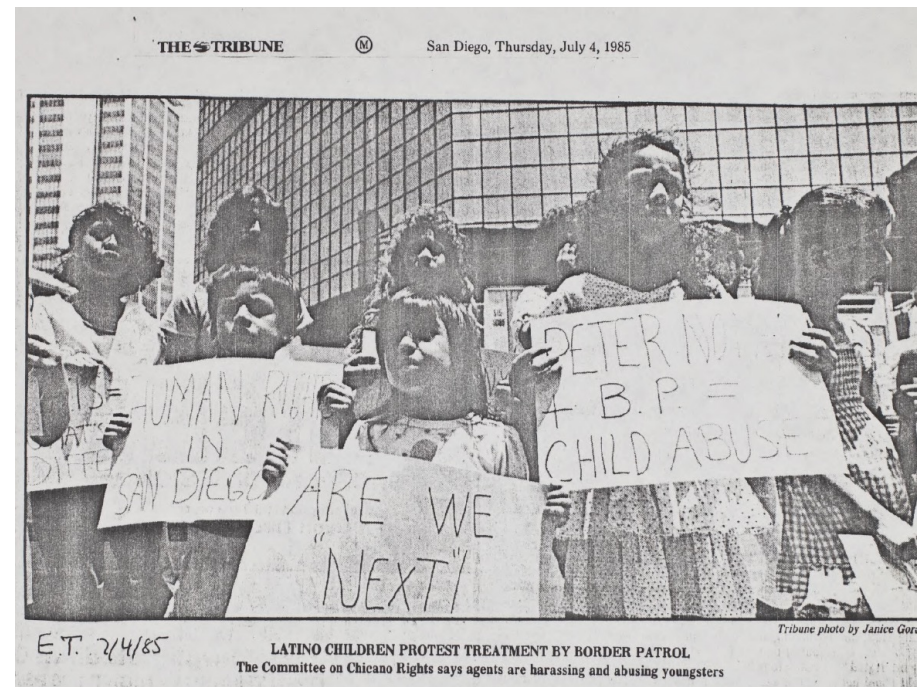
## Youths Tell of Privations as Pickers Claims Are Basis of \$3.85 Million Suit Against Grower

**BY JOHN KENDALL**  
*Times Staff Writer*

**RIVERSIDE**—Leaving Atotonilco, Mexico, to pick oranges in California offered teen-agers Guillermo Valdivia and Jesus Alvarez Hernandez a promise of adventure and a chance for big money. They understood from the man who recruited

ICLS managing attorney Irene Cardenas Gallardo anticipates that the case will have a "broad impact" when other migrant workers learn of it and seek legal aid.

She believes that the practices alleged in the suit are widespread in ci-



# Denying the Rights of Childhood & Weaponizing Innocence in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

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- Migrant youth's racialization "adultified" them, causing them to be viewed as migrants or workers rather than young people in need of protection
- Migrant youth were not always denied their childhood innocence. But benefiting from the politics of childhood sometimes meant that minors' innocence would be weaponized against them or their parents to criminalize them both