

June 8, 2021

OPEN LETTER TO:

Joseph Biden, Jr., President of the United States of America

Andrés Manuel López Obrador, President of the United Mexican States

Dear Heads of State,

As representatives of Mexican immigrant organizations in the United States of America (U.S.), we share our concern and interest surrounding points of discussion between the Vice President of the U.S., Mrs. Kamala Harris and the President of Mexico Andrés Manuel López Obrador. More than 40 million people of Mexican origin live in the U.S., including nearly 12 million people who were born in Mexico. As a result, today's meeting is of much importance to us. We see an opportunity in this meeting, as well as a challenge given the political, social, and economic reality in both countries today. We share a series of concerns and demands on the various issues that impact living conditions for our families in the U.S. and in Mexico.

THE ECONOMIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES

An evaluation of its impact, and necessary changes should be put in place to alleviate the negative impacts of the current U.S.-Mexico trade agreements, which were built on an economic model that has historically excluded the majority of people in Mexico. In the versions adopted in 1994 and 2018, such regional trade agreements have failed to produce conditions of wellbeing for the vast majority of people. These agreements promised many benefits to people in the U.S. and Mexico. However, economic indicators have shown a significant deterioration in the standards of life for the Mexican population in both countries, which continues pushing thousands of people to leave Mexico in search of personal safety and better living conditions for their families.

TEMPORARY WORK PROGRAMS

A careful evaluation of these programs should be done, along with the necessary changes to guarantee full respect for the human and labor rights of workers participating in these programs. Temporary workers are frequently exposed to illegal visa fees, transportation, housing, and labor exploitation, lack of access to basic services, and precarious housing conditions that lead to severe living conditions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, temporary workers face risks of contagion due to living conditions in their countries of origin, which are only compounded by their living conditions as temporary workers in the United States. As we seek to expand these programs in Mexico and Central American countries, it will be critical to overcome the aforementioned failures and many others associated with temporary work programs for foreign workers in the U.S.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Guarantee the protection of human rights for all people regardless of legal immigration status. Both nations should guarantee access to education, work, housing, and health. Both nations should demonstrate making concrete steps to recognize human mobility as a fundamental human right and stop the criminalization of migrants. Families should enjoy the right to a life free from violence in their country of origin, during transit, and in their host country. It is urgent that Mexican consulates ensure adequate programs of protection and representation. Guaranteeing migrants their human rights is a principle that should be reinforced from the moment they leave their countries and systems should be developed to ensure that these rights are exercised.

PROTECTION FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

The U.S. and Mexico must follow international frameworks that ensure the protection of indigenous peoples' rights, who should be adequately consulted when projects are underway that undermine their rights. The governments of the U.S. and

Mexico should recognize the indigenous rights of self-determination, land, territory, and resources; of nationality, as well as the rights to family, education, health, culture, and language. Any governmental or private initiative, including national development plans, infrastructure projects, extraction of natural resources, climate change mitigation, and other subjects that affect indigenous peoples, should guarantee free consent and informed notice so that indigenous peoples are not forced to relocate or be displaced against their will.

HUMANITARIAN PROTECTION

Requesting asylum is a human right. In previous years, U.S. policy has been to immediately reject asylum seekers who are primarily from Mexico, Central America, and other nations. In addition, thousands of people who have arrived at the southern U.S. border have been immediately returned to Mexico through the rigorous application of programs such as the "Migrant Protection Protocol (MPP)," as well as Title 42. Detaining unaccompanied minors who come to the United States violates the guarantee of protection and the best interests of these children. It is necessary that both governments guarantee and provide humanitarian protection for families seeking a place to live safely and guarantee human rights standards of wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the most vulnerable populations in the U.S. and migrants' countries of origin, increasing gaps in inequality related to lack of access to health care and loss of jobs, as well as in economic and social inequality. Women, who are often heads of households, have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and its consequences, deepening challenges surrounding emotional health which offer few possibilities for quick recovery.

Nearly 20% of people of Mexican origin in the United States live in poverty, a condition worsened by the deterioration and dispossession of natural resources and highly punitive border control policies including militarization. Family separation and incapacity to reform U.S. immigration policy in the U.S. are realities in urgent need of corrective action.

Through this medium, we request that both governments immediately reconsider policies that promote inequality and aggravate social conditions in the U.S. and Mexico. The pandemic, yet to be overcome, should be a moment to adopt policies that ensure economic and social protection, with universal implementation that betters the lives of families in each country. Additionally, it is urgent to recognize the invaluable and diverse contributions that immigrants make to the places where we live, regardless of our country of origin.

IMMIGRATION REFORM

As Mexican immigrants living in the United States, we ask the Biden-Harris administration to prioritize a pathway to citizenship for all undocumented youth and their families. Undocumented immigrants have been the motor keeping the US economy running as essential workers during the COVID-19 pandemic and deserve to feel protected and safe in this country we call home. An immediate step should be to adopt policy reforms to allow the nearly 1.3 million DACA-eligible youth, as well as beneficiaries of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and their families to be able to apply for permanent residence status. A humane and just immigration reform is critical for the wellbeing of millions of people and for the economic recovery of the United States, Mexico, and Central America. We must pass humane legislation that does not prioritize some, while criminalizing others. Policy solutions must be inclusive of everyone. They must reconsider the draconian and inherently racist infrastructure that has demonized immigrants for wanting a better life. For years, the U.S. has punished and separated families at the hands of white supremacist and xenophobic policies that keep our communities in fear. We call on President Lopez Obrador to insist that migrant families not be separated, that their human rights be protected as he promises to do the same for migrants who arrive in Mexico, in transit to the U.S.

Thank you,

Alianza Americas
Red Mexicana
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