

Gemma López Limón: 1943-2011



(Excerpts from the presentation delivered by Professor Gemma López (UABC-Mexicali) at a Forum in the California State Capitol in Sacramento on April 30, 2010, titled, “What Kind of Immigration Reform Do We Need?”)

If we are going to talk about immigration reform, we have to look at the country that is expelling its labor force, which is Mexico.

What has happened in the country so that it forces its people to leave?

It's no mystery. At the root of this mass emigration are policies that have been imposed on Mexico from the United States, such as the privatization of national businesses and public services, the reduction of social spending, the destruction of local agriculture and communal lands, the destruction of labor rights; in a word, the impoverishment of the people.

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) helped ruin the country's development and has led to the expulsion of millions of people from Mexico. We are demanding genuine national development in Mexico so that people don't continue to leave. As was said by Al Rojas and his group, we must fight “For the right not to emigrate.”

We need domestic development, a Mexican domestic market. But for this we need to break with and repeal NAFTA. Since 2000, when the second phase of NAFTA kicked in, more than 500,000 people have left Mexico each year for the United States to look for a living.

Later on, NAFTA was transformed into a military treaty:



Speakers and activists who gave testimony to the Forum/Debate on Immigration Reform in Sacramento

the Merida Initiative (or Plan Mexico). This is the Mexican version of the infamous Plan Colombia. This initiative involves the militarization of the country, which, at its heart, has enabled the looting of the country and its oil and other natural resources, and has meant greater exploitation of the work force.

This militarization of Mexico began with the George W. Bush administration. Bush ordered Mexico's fraudulently elected President Felipe Calderon to take measures militarizing the country with the excuse of fighting drug trafficking. The real aim, however, is social control — that is, control of the resistance cropping up throughout the country against these union-busting and privatization plans.

This past March 23 [2011], we had the entire military apparatus of the United States in Mexico. Janet Napolitano, head of Homeland Security, stated publicly that Calderon himself had asked for direct U.S. military intervention in Mexico in order to “end the drug war.”

We know that this war is being carried out with impunity — with the complicity of the enormously corrupt State apparatus, because the drug traffickers are involved with the state apparatus.

We agree with your demands. It is indispensable to have amnesty, papers for all, and an end to the roundups. It is indispensable to demand that families aren't separated. It is indispensable to have a policy that favors the immigrant labor force in the United States.

And we would like to urge you to add two more demands: Repeal NAFTA and Repeal the Merida Initiative!