

The Beets of Betrayal: Mexican Repatriation and Exploitation of Betabeleros in the 1930s

Rights and Responsibilities in History:

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I chose the Mexican Repatriation and exploitation of *betabeleros* because it is a time in history not many know about and is shockingly relevant today. It is important to study and not to let it be forgotten because of this relevance. It is crucial not to let this history repeat itself and to protect the rights of laborers and non-citizens. It relates to the annual theme as a sovereign state has the right to deport non-citizen individuals who do not benefit the country, yet they also have the responsibility to be cautious and precise with who they deport. It also connects to the rights of immigrant laborers, as non-citizens who reside in a country have the responsibility to contribute to that country, yet they also have the right to be treated decently and to stay in that country unless they break the law.

I started researching with the *Decade of Betrayal*. From that source, I found various other secondary sources, which gave me more specific information about the deportations and the *betabeleros* of Michigan in particular. After discovering distinct subtopics, I found many primary sources to strengthen my argument and gained firsthand opinions and data about the events leading up to and during the deportations. I found most of my primary sources on jstor.org, a digital library that provides free primary and secondary sources. Additionally, I found three Lansing State Journal primary sources by emailing the author of one of my secondary sources for citation purposes.

After conducting my research and drafting my project, I created it by compiling quotes and other information I found important to the event and organizing them into subcategories, such as immigration or deportation. These subcategories, along with the required elements such as the thesis, written works, and closing, became the pages of my website. After drafting the pages, I used the NHD WebCentral website builder to organize my drafts onto the actual website. At first, the website builder was frustrating to work with, but after learning how to use it it was a helpful tool.

My historical argument is that in the 1930s, times were already hard for workers in the United States, but they were especially difficult for Mexican immigrant laborers, including *betabeleros*. These workers had been brought to Michigan because of conditions that allowed domestic sugar production to thrive. They worked in the sugar beet fields until the economy crashed. After that, instead of appreciating what they contributed to America's economy, they became scapegoats for American unemployment. Claiming that Mexicans were taking jobs from American citizens, the government pushed migrants out of the country. This event is an example of how the United States disregarded immigrant laborers' rights and shirked their responsibility to protect those workers. This event, the rights of immigrant laborers, and the government's responsibility to be cautious and precise with who they deport is essential to study and keep in mind in light of our current policies and threats of mass deportation that we see today.