# **Latino Immigrant Narratives from Maryland**

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#### **Abstract**

Despite the intensive work conducted by scholars to capture and preserve the memories of Latino immigrants in the Los Angeles, New York, Miami, and Chicago metro areas, relatively little is known about the history and experiences of this immigrant group living in the Washington metro area, home to twelve of the top sixty Latino communities in the nation. Currently, there are 906,000 Latinos living in the region. This paper showcases some of the perspectives of Latino immigrants through oral history interviews conducted by students in two undergraduate history courses offer at Montgomery College (MC)<sup>64</sup>: "History of Latinos in the US" and "Latin American History."

Students in these classes are required to identify immigrant community members and to request their cooperation for being interviewed. The process of collecting, creating, and preserving the life stories of these immigrants stimulates a keen interest in how both place of origin and historical experience inform the lives of immigrants. It gives the students too the opportunity to understand the impact of the past on immigrant experience and to gain an understanding of immigrants' aspirations, hopes, and fears as well as their positive contributions to American society and culture.

During the course of a semester, students conduct, transcribe, and construct oral histories and compose brief, one-page reflections on their interviews. Specifically, students document how their assumptions about the historical immigrant experience have changed as a result of their participation in this oral history project. The transcripts generated by these students represent

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> The Washington Metropolitan Area, also known as the National Capital Region, includes the District of Columbia (Washington, DC), parts of Northern Virginia, Maryland, and a small portion of West Virginia. Out of 6,098,283 residents living in this region, 22.9% are foreign-born (1,397, 326), https://censusreporter.org/profiles/31000US47900-washington-arlington-alexandria-dc-va-md-wv-metro-area/ (accessed 04/12/2017).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> In this paper the term "Latinos" or "Hispanics" – unlike the "standard" scholarly definitions – is laxly used to refer to people whose origins are traced to Spain, Portugal, Mexico, Central or South America, and the Caribbean, regardless of time of arrival or length of residence in North America.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> MC is a public community college located in the city of Rockville, Maryland

original and relevant primary sources contributing an understanding of how the past is prologue for American immigrants going forward and foster an appreciation of the immigrant presence among us.

Keywords: Latino immigrants, USA

#### Introduction

Although the Washington Metro Region is home to Latino immigrants from the farthest corners of the hemisphere, Salvadorians, 302,000-strong, comprise the largest Latino group (33.3%), by far surpassing Mexicans, the next largest group, at 133,000 (14.6%). In light of this, it is not a random accident that the majority of our interviewees were Salvadorian immigrants, reflecting the ethnicity and national origin of the students who conducted the interviews.

As I went over the sixty oral histories collected by my students, I noted many heart-rending stories detailing the compelling reasons why these mostly unauthorized immigrants from El Salvador chose to abandon their homelands. Their vivid portrayals of their perilous journeys through Guatemala and Mexico, and across the scorching Arizona desert and their subsequent adaptation formed a recurrent theme, reflecting, like tightly interwoven threads into what would become the fabric of their immigrant lives, their realization that, against all odds, they have achieved their most cherished aspirations, their *Sueños Latinos* (Latino Dreams) of living in this country.

The optimistic assertions of the interviewees seem to brazenly challenge the cold statistical data gathered by the U.S. Census Bureau, documenting that Latinos trail the non-Hispanic White population in many important indicators of economic wellbeing, including employment, income, and wealth accumulation, statistics that posit that Latin immigrants are disproportionately concentrated in low-paying economic sectors such agriculture, leisure, and hospitality. They further contend that lower-paying occupations translate into comparatively lower income for Latino workers when compared to Whites, specifying that "median weekly earnings of Hispanic workers employed full-time are 27 percent less than the median weekly earnings of non-Hispanic White workers—\$602 per week versus \$829 per week."

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> "Hispanic Population and Origin in Select U.S. Metropolitan Areas, 2014, " Pew Research Center, Hispanic Trends, accessed March 13, 2017, http://www.pewhispanic.org/interactives/hispanic-population-in-select-u-s-metropolitan-areas/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> "The Economic State of the Latino Community in America," U.S. Congress Joint Economic Committee, October 2015, accessed March 15, 2017

We note, however, that the median household annual income of \$65,736 in 2014 tells another story of how Latinos in the Washington Metro Region are among the top earners among the 56.6 million members of this immigrant group in the U.S.<sup>67</sup> The self-awareness of this relative affluence, when compared to their fellow Latinos elsewhere, couldn't but color the perceptions of our respondents.

By taking a glimpse into some representative interviews, we will be in a better position to discern if our informants' perceptions of their achievements, most of whom had toiled in a series of low-paying and menial jobs in their countries of origin, if their experiences are rosy depictions of grim existential realities or true reflections of fulfilled aspirations. Are the "Latino Dreams" of our interviewees perhaps less aspirational and lower in expectations than the American Dream envisioned by historian James Truslow Adams at the height of the Great Depression and, therefore, that these newcomers are perhaps content with ordinary successes?

Paradoxically, their perceptions that their dreams and longings have come to fruition takes place against a background of a country beset by growing income inequality since the 1980s, the consequence of frantic globalization, rapid technologic change, deindustrialization, and the increasing degradation of the skill level of the American worker.<sup>68</sup>

#### Salvadorian Dreams

Julian: A Busboy with a University-bound child. Mr. Julian Rodriguez, an undocumented Salvadorian with a high school education, left his country in 1979 at the age of twenty-one in search of adventure, just a year before the outbreak of civil war in El Salvador. He could feel the growing tension in the air in his departamento (state) Morazán, and confides that if he had not left to go to the U.S. he "...would have had to join the guerillas because I sided more with them and I understood their values more than the government's." Actually, it was in and around the village of El Mozote, in Morazán, that on December 11, 1981, more than 800 civilians

https://www.jec.senate.gov/public/\_cache/files/96c9cbb5-d206-4dd5-acca-955748e97fd1/jec-hispanic-report-final.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> Joel Kotkin and Wendell Cox, "The U.S. Cities Where Hispanics Are Doing the Best Economically." *Forbes*, January 30, 2015, accessed March 16, 2017 https://www.forbes.com/sites/joelkotkin/2015/01/30/the-u-s-cities-where-hispanics-are-doing-the-best-economically/#2e90824e2e1a

<sup>68</sup> David, Leonhard. "The American Dream, Quantified at Last." *The New York Times*, December 8, 2016, accessed January 27, 2017<a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/08/opinion/the-american-dream-quantified-at-last.html?\_r=0 SundayReview">https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/08/opinion/the-american-dream-quantified-at-last.html?\_r=0 SundayReview</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> Gilberto Gomez (busboy), interviewed by Jonathan Gomez, Silver Spring, Maryland, February, 2017.

were killed by the Salvadoran Army. This was the bloodiest mass killing of the Salvadoran Civil War.

He left his girlfriend and future wife behind and took with him an extensive set of unusable farming skills (planting, harvesting, milking, etc.) and his shattered dreams of attending an agricultural college in Brazil. He, with a group friends, reached Texas after travelling across Guatemala and Mexico. In those days, unauthorized crossers had fewer challenges "jumping" over a barrier that was more porous. Soon, Julian boarded an airplane in Houston bound for Washington, DC and began a new chapter in his life.

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his life.

Upon arrival, he was absolutely bewildered by the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the region:

My first impression when I got here was that I had never seen so much diversity in one place. Especially when I was in DC.

I had never seen so many African-American people and White people before I came. The only African-American I had seen was a young boy playing for the El Salvadoran national team...[There was] ... a lot of diversity everywhere and even in the jobs I had, I met other immigrants from Russia or Spain and they told me their stories of how they (were) trying to make it in the United States.

Indeed, Mr. Rodriguez's journey from Central America to the metropolitan capitol of the U.S. represented not only a journey to ecologically and culturally unknown areas, but also a sharp technological leap from a predominantly agrarian region to an area dotted by mammoth federal facilities, biotechnology corridors, and the like. This primarily service-oriented metropolis represented for this germinal generation of Central Americans not only higher wages in a more stable country and the concomitant benefits of life in a big city - schools, hospitals, recreation centers - but also the challenge of working and living with a population whose ethnic and racial heterogeneity reflected the "globalization" characteristic of Washington, DC. The rise of the U.S. as a superpower in the wake of the outcome of World War II transformed this relatively bucolic city of the pre-war years into a primary destination for diplomats, companies profiting from federal contracts, corporate lobbyists, and swelling armies of bureaucrats, professionals, technocrats, etc.

For the next 37 years, Mr. Rodriguez, according to his own words, would hold jobs that "...were very common for anybody who came to the U.S., such as being part of cleaning crews at hotels, demolition laborers at construction sites, a busboy for twenty-plus years until the restaurant that employed him went out of business, all the while helping his wife cleanin

homes. Parenthetically, Mr. Rodriguez has been successful in getting his son to college "... on pennies, nickels, dimes and quarters."

Mr. Rodriguez incursions - and permanency - into the traditional occupational beachheads in the U.S. where low-skilled immigrants, frequently lacking legal residency, tended to concentrate, wasn't unexpected. Actually, decades before Central Americans had become the essential "foot-Actually, decades before Central Americans had become the essential "foot-soldiers" of the growing armies employed in construction, the recreation and hospitality industries, the transportation and material moving occupations, landscaping and agriculture in the Washington Metro Region, Mexican immigrants had been occupying these niches in other metro regions. As laborers, Latinos, with the skill sets possessed by immigrants like Mr. Rodriguez, fell into a generic category of workers who were overtly conspicuous at construction sites, hotels, restaurants, shopping malls, hospitals, and front yards of residential neighborhoods - faceless wielders of brushes, ladders, leaf blowers, shovels, lawn mowers operators, and pushers of wheelbarrows, skills where more brawn than brain were - and still are - the indispensable prerequisites. Indeed, that these occupations have been so the indispensable prerequisites. Indeed, that these occupations have been so associated with Latinos for decades has, in the popular American imagination, merged these jobs with the identities of members of this group. Thus, the term Salvadorian in the American imaginary simultaneously serves to describe an individual of Latino ancestry usually performing unskilled tasks in the construction or service sectors of the economy anywhere in the U.S.

Noe: Living la Vida Loca in the Shadow of the Capitol. Noe Rivera is a 52-year-old Salvadorian who emigrated to the U.S. in 1997 when he was thirty-two years old. Noe survived the Salvadoran Civil War and continued to live in El Salvador after the 1991 Peace Accords. However, the lingering effects of the conflict, compounded by the loss of a coveted job as a sales representative for a cigarette manufacturer, necessitated relocation to a lower-wage country, Honduras, where stiffer competition in the labor markets, due to the arrival of newcomers displaced by earthquakes, led him to make a life-changing decision. He seized the opportunity and accepted the invitation to come to the U.S. offered by his brother-in-law. He applied and

to make a life-changing decision. He seized the opportunity and accepted the invitation to come to the U.S. offered by his brother-in-law. He applied and was granted a tourist visa, thus avoiding a long-trip to the U.S. and having to cross the Mexican border, a trajectory that was fraught with potential perils.

Although Noe had pursued college studies in his homeland, he had to abandon his them to support his wife when she became pregnant with their first child. Laconically, he acknowledged his inability to transfer any useful marketable skills in the U.S., other than basic labor. According to him, his

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> Noe Rivera (laborer), interviewed by Christopher Rivera, Silver Spring, Maryland, March 2017.

greatest challenge was to learn English and his business dream and goal was

greatest challenge was to learn English and his business dream and goal was to own a construction company.

When asked if his expectations were met in America, he proudly replies that his accomplishments surpassed his dreams.

They were exceeded and far better than I imagined. I thought I was just going to be a laborer and make fast money to live a better life than in El Salvador. Never did I imagine I would own a successful business in the U.S. I live a pretty good life in my eyes, definitely better than anything I would have lived if I had stayed in El Salvador.

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Reflecting on the tangible results of his travails in this country, he measures his success inter-generationally by partly taking credit for his children's accomplishments and his parents' improved standing:

I do feel I have made the right decision coming to the U.S. because not only did I better my life, I made it possible for my family, especially my kids, to have a better opportunity at a better quality of life. As a parent, you want the best for your kids and, well, I think I did right by them. Personal accomplishments too are having a substantial home, owning more than three cars, having a dog, being able to make enough to give to my parents for them to have a better quality of life. I also feel accomplished by my children: One has a bachelor's degree from the University of Maryland, a wellrespected school, and has a good-paying job and he plans on going after his masters. My other son is in college, in the process of earning his first degree. My youngest son is in high school and has not hit under a 3.8 GPA. They not may be my personal accomplishments but I do take credit in putting my kids into these situations of being successful. I feel more than accomplished because I have made a big turnaround from how I used to live. Basically "living the la vida loca," as some will say.

José Luis: A Janitor with a Graduate-School Bound Daughter. José Luis Rios, a seventy-six-year-old Salvadorian, moved to the U.S. in 1980, at the dawn of a conflict that would eventually claimed 75,000 lives, afraid that he would be subjected to reprisals for refusing to join the guerrilla forces. Jose Luis, then thirty-nine years old, left behind what seemed a contented life:

I was a country guy my whole life, which consisted mostly of farming, buying, and selling farm animals and growing crops to feed my family and make some money out of it too. That's

how my father raised me and how I was visualizing my whole life; little did I know back then.  $^{71}$ 

Although, in the early 1980s, the existing ethnic networks available to Salvadorians in the Washington Metro Region were rather thin, he relied on three older sisters who where already residing in the region. He left behind his five months pregnant life partner, a sister, an older brother, and his father. A few weeks after his departure, they fled for their lives to the capital, abandoning home, farm land, animals, and everything else...

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My whole life changed. I left everything I was and everything I had. Just imagine, after being a country man used to working the land and dealing with farm animals, to suddenly being forced to move to a big city like Washington DC. It was a significant change. At first, it was very intimidating, you know, moving to a strange country with a language you don't even understand, a place where you know some people but it's not like your hometown where you know everyone and everyone knows you since birth. After several years, of course, you get used to everything, you push yourself to survive, and you keep moving forward.

Handicapped by lack of English skills, Mr. Rios had to "... settle with whatever job..." he could get in restaurants as a dishwasher and busboy. For "quite a while" he held three jobs. He is now retiring from a job he held as a janitor at a day care center for 11 years.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Rios, from an occupational perspective, moved endlessly "in a circular fashion" - forty years of grueling toil, holding a low entry-level job in the service sector - he still deems himself successful for being able to flee the carnage of his country's civil war, being alive and living with his family.

So far, after so many years, I would say yes, that I made the right decision, mostly because I am able to tell my story and I am alive. Most of my family is here now. We all have a decent life, we work, we don't depend on anybody, and we are free. What else can we ask for?

He bolstered his argument by adding that he is now able to communicate in English and has obtained U.S. citizenship. Furthermore, his daughter, Martha, is excelling in college and plans to enroll in a graduate program.

Mr. Rios' journey from being a small farmer in serious financial distress, handicapped by a low level of formal education and illegal status at

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>71</sup> Jose Luis Rios (janitor), interviewed by Martha Santos, Gaithersburg, Maryland, Maryland, February, 2017.

the time of his arrival to someone holding a full-time job, mastering the English language, and having a daughter bound for graduate school is truly a remarkable story.

Luis: "Doing even better than some people born in this country." Mr. Luis Bonilla, a 50-year-old Salvadorian from the municipality of San Vicente, left his country fleeing the Salvadoran Civil War in search of educational opportunities. A recipient of a scholarship offered by the Embassy of the United States in El Salvador in 1985, this allowed him to enroll at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge and at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches, Louisiana, to study English, and to become familiar with American culture and to obtain an Associate Degree in Agricultural Science.

By May of 1990, his scholarship over, he returned to El Salvador, which was still engulfed in civil war. His stay was short, only three months, during which time he was unable to secure a job and faced recurrent Army draft notices. He, again, seized opportunity, this time to attend a workshop in Miami offered by the Pan-American Network and then overstayed his visa.

From Miami he moved to Washington, DC, where, with the assistance of his sister's best friend's husband, got a job at an electronics

retail store. Eventually, he was able to gain permanent legal status in the United States.

For the next 11 years, he worked there as a salesman, accumulating enough experience and savings to open a store in the same line of business in 2000, Choice Electronics, Inc. This store sold DJ equipment, home electronics, car stereos, and other electronics. The Great Recession of 2008 took a toll on his business which he closed in 2010. He reinvented himself and ventured into a service-oriented field in which middle-class immigrants are well-represented: accounting services, offering tax preparation, notary public services, and translation, with an on-site, in-house attorney who provided full services but mainly focused on immigration. His ad sums up the nature of what he now does for a living:

For tax preparation in Silver Spring MD, you can count on Luis A. Bonilla. (He)...assists taxpayers and small businesses with taxes in Silver Spring MD and the surrounding communities. Whether you are an individual or a local business in or around Silver Spring MD, Luis A. Bonilla has years of valuable experience as an IRS-registered tax preparer.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>72</sup> Luis Bonilla (businessman), interviewed by William Bonilla, Silver Spring, Maryland, February, 2017.

Mr. Bonilla's perception of success transcends the "family-centric" parameters of achievement (self and children). When asked if he had achieved the hopes and dreams he envisioned, he firmly replied

I would think so, yeah. And I think I have even accomplished more than what I expected because I helped my family, my parents, my brothers and sisters, I think I have pretty much done what I wanted.

He continues, expressing gratitude for where he's gotten in life, the family he has, and the business he owns. An interesting remark he makes, and one that truly shows what is possible if you set your mind to it, is his conviction that he's done better than, even, "some people that are born in this country, so that's something that makes me very proud."

Roger, the Campesino/Farmer in Search of Greener Pastures. Roger Flores, a forty-five-year-old Salvadorian from the city of San Miguel, recalls how his parents, who owned farm animals, still could make end meet. Thus, for him school wasn't a priority, but getting a job was, so that his family members "...could have a plate of food to eat every day." He left El Salvador at seventeen in 1989 with truncated high school studies, prompted by his parents who had lost a son, a member of the Salvadoran Army, in the War. He attributes his inability to continue studying to his meager family income and his imperative flight from peril. With the help of a family friend and a group of coyotes\* and armed with a gallon of water, the clothes on his back and the shoes on his feet, he entered the U.S. illegally across Mexico, and from Texas traveled to Maryland to join his brothers already residing in that state.

Roger, like José Luis, is grateful for what members of the middle classes in his country of origin and the around the world, take for granted, the seemingly "small, mundane" things of life, like owning a home and a car, which were out of reach in El Salvador for most people. Actually, according to the Work Bank, only 49 out of 1,000 people owned passenger cars in 2009.

He believes that "...his hopes and dreams have come true for his family." A further testament to his accomplishments he sums up saying that he is now a naturalized citizen of the United States, has gotten his parents permanent residency, speaks English very well, has a wife that works, holds a job with health care benefits, and his children have access to educational opportunities – all not possible in El Salvador.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>73</sup> Roger Flores (construction worker), interviewed by Alejandra Flores, Silver Spring, Maryland, February, 2017.

For a former undocumented alien to obtain U.S. citizenship from the economic powerhouse of the world is not a small feat for an immigrant who, unlike highly skilled foreign workers in designated "specialty occupations," never dreamed of entering the U.S. under the H1-B visa program. He considers his U.S. citizenship a precious "commodity" that has served him well as an instrument to reunify his family by bringing his parents to the U.S. Furthermore, having two incomes at home and access to health benefits, "...when you had *none* at home, isn't that the true measure of success?"

Santiago, the Painter Who Reached for the Stars. Mr. Santiago Amaya was born in San Miguel, El Salvador, a very small town without many resources or any vehicular transportation. Like most of his compatriots who left El Salvador throughout the 1980s, the main driver propelling him from of his country was the war and his quest for stability and prosperity. Both the army and guerrilla forces were very active in the area, forcing the villagers to house and feed them, even while suspecting that some of them were collaborating with the enemy, which could mean swift execution. Other than that, the loud sounds of gunfire and bomb explosions dropped by army airplanes became the most persuasive arguments for Mr. Amaya to become part of the North-bound immigrant stream. Thus, in 1985, him, a country boy who could hardly read and write (the nearest school was an hour away on foot), left behind his parents, his wife Francesca, and his two children and undertook his journey Al Norte/to The North. Downplaying the potentially deadly predicament he and his fellow undocumented travelers faced on their way to the U.S. He stated that:

It was a strenuous excursion because we had to walk long distances and travel in overcrowded trailers (trucks). On our way north, the air conditioning in the trailer I was in broke and two people died; it scared all of us and we began to worry if we would even make it to America alive.

The truck in which he was travelling was stopped by the Border Patrol in the San Diego area, and upon his release he travelled to Maryland to join other family members.

He reminisces on how little money he was paid in El Salvador back then, 5 *colones* or the equivalent to 50 cents a day: "Just imagine having to feed and clothe your family with just 50 cents a day." Eventually, he got a job that paid \$6.00 an hour and that made him feel immensely wealthy until he started paying his bills and sending remittances to his love ones.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>74</sup> Santiago Amaya (painter and landscaper laborer), interviewed by Santiago Amaya, Jr., Gaithersburg, Maryland, April, 2017.

Keenly aware that his lack of command of the English language, compounded by his low level of formal education and transferable skills, he "self-selected" himself for occupations in economic sectors where absolute physical exertion (he often worked 80 hours a week) was required, and in which oral communications abilities were not. When asked to tell the kinds of jobs he has had in the U.S., he replied:

The occupations I've held in this country are: dishwasher, busboy, and currently I'm a painter and do some landscaping work occasionally. I spoke no English at all when I first arrived here, so jobs like a dishwasher and busboy came to me easily because it didn't require me to speak to anyone or have much education.

Mr. Amaya, succinctly ponders his utter astonishment at what he has accomplished in the U.S. based on his scanty human capital.

It just amazes me that two immigrants with no education, who can't read or write, could have children fluent in both English and Spanish that are currently in college. This was the life I dreamed of for my family and I'm so glad that we decided to emigrate to America.

### Conclusion

Fredrick Douglas, a slave born in 1818 and who eventually became the most influential African-American leader of his generation, encapsulated in a few words the challenges faced by four million emancipated slaves, who, burdened by the dead weight of hundreds of years of oppression, were

seemingly progressing rather slowly:

It is not fair play to start the Negro out in life, from nothing and with nothing, while others start with the advantage of a thousand years behind them. He should be measured, not by the heights others have obtained, but from the depths from which he has come.

which he has come.

By the same token, what should be the correct analytical frame by which to measure Latino immigrant success in the U.S.? Should it solely be measured by the acquisition of university degrees, real estate assets, or investments accumulated and flaunted during a life of toil by members of the pioneer immigrant generation? Or should we, for the sake of objectivity and fairness, take into consideration the aggregation of pre-migration assets that immigrants possessed prior to their journeys to the United States and that they bring to bear in their quest for success? Should we, like in an unbiased judge in a grueling Olympic marathon, where athletes with similar physical assets, although starting in unison, yet get to the finish line at different times – conclude that the well-documented income differentials among immigrants

in the U.S. are largely explained by non-socioeconomic variables such a national or ethnic ethos characterized by limitless ambition, unflinching quest, and fortitude? Or, perhaps, should we, contrary to popular assumption, conclude that, in the relentless quest for success, individuals and immigrant groups attain positions contingent upon strikingly different departure times and pre-migration endowments? And continuing with this figurative comparison between immigrant success and a marathon competition, immigrants well-bestowed with a wealth of human and social capital assets - *including* lawful legal status - even before they board the plane that will take them to their final destination, will invariably get a fresh start, propelling them farther ahead of "the pack," including the "runners" who joined the competition long before they did.

Furthermore, what should the proper benchmark be for the analysis of immigrant attainment? Should it be solely the specific accomplishments of individual immigrants? Or should we rely on an intergenerational, transnational approach to unravel the accelerated pace of success - or its apparent slowness - not only of first generation immigrants, but also their American-born or American-raised offspring?

Sociologists Jennifer Lee and Min Zhou (Asian American Achievement Paradox), challenging the well-ingrained narrative of Asian American "exceptionalism" and the seemingly ordinary success of Mexican immigrants and their American children, after comparing the mobility experiences of Asians and Mexicans in the Los Angeles Metro Area through the prism of intergenerational mobility, make a startling revelation:

...when we consider starting points and define success as the

...when we consider starting points and define success as the progress from one generation to the next, the children of Mexican immigrants are the most successful...When we...reframe our measure of success as intergenerational progress *rather than outcomes*, our data show that Mexicans are the most successful second-generation.<sup>75</sup>

We could extrapolate and state than not only Salvadorians but their American born or raised children are equally the most successful generation. This is true by virtue of the fact that in terms of immigration status, education, employment, and income, Mexicans and Salvadorians share many commonalities: high unauthorized emigration rates, low levels of formal education, limited English proficiency, and high workforce participation in predominantly low-skilled occupations with the lowest-paid earnings.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Jennifer Lee, and Min Zhou. *The Asian American Achievement Paradox* (New York :Russell Sage Foundation, 2015), 94-95, Kindle.

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