

## Exile and Repatriation in the *Barrios*: The Great Depression in *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*, 1930-1932

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### ABSTRACT

During the Great Depression, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* were two of the top-selling Spanish-language newspapers in the United States. These publications, established by Porfirista exile Ignacio E. Lozano, served the Mexican immigrant community, known as *el México de afuera*, by reporting news from Mexico and the United States, and by encouraging charitable work during the economic crisis. More importantly, these newspapers published news and commentary related to the repatriation of approximately one million Mexicans and Mexican-Americans during the 1930s, a policy enacted by the U.S. government. This essay examines the reactions of *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* to repatriation, and the important perspective they provide on forced displacement from both sides of the U.S./Mexico border. Lozano and his staff were political exiles, banished from Mexico for criticizing the country's revolutionary regime. Consequently, their political situation in Mexico and the fear of deportation influenced their non-combative reactions to repatriation. Nonetheless, Lozano and his colleagues considered themselves opinion leaders in the Mexican *barrios*, and they helped *barrio* residents by promoting charity work. They also maintained a sense of the optimism of the 1920s by publishing columns on sports, Hollywood, and popular

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culture, thus providing a momentary escape for readers from the challenges of the Great Depression.

Keywords: *La Prensa*, *La Opinión*, repatriation, deportation, immigration, Great Depression, México de afuera, exile, barrio, Ignacio E. Lozano, Porfirista

## RESUMEN

Durante la época de la Gran Depresión, *La Prensa* y *La Opinión* fueron dos de los periódicos en español de mayor tiraje en Estados Unidos. Estos periódicos fueron establecidos por el exiliado porfirista Ignacio E. Lozano, y a los inmigrantes mexicanos, conocidos como *el México de afuera*. *La Prensa* y *La Opinión* reportaban noticias de México y Estados Unidos, y animaban al público a participar en obras de beneficencia durante la crisis económica. Además, los periódicos de Lozano publicaron noticias y editoriales sobre la repatriación de casi un millón de mexicanos y mexico-americanos durante la década de 1930. Este ensayo analiza la perspectiva importante que proveen *La Prensa* y *La Opinión* sobre la repatriación y el desplazamiento forzado por la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos. Lozano y sus colegas eran exiliados políticos, expulsados de México por criticar el régimen revolucionario. Esta situación y el temor a la deportación impidieron una reacción combativa en contra del gobierno estadounidense por la política de la repatriación. Sin embargo, Lozano y sus colegas, quienes se consideraban líderes de opinión en los barrios mexicanos, promovieron obras caritativas para ayudar a sus compatriotas. También publicaron secciones dedicadas a deportes, Hollywood y la cultura popular para mantener el optimismo de la década de 1920. De esa forma, los lectores podrían evadirse por un momento de las dificultades provocadas por la Gran Depresión.

Palabras clave: *La Prensa*, *La Opinión*, repatriación, deportación, inmigración, Gran Depresión, México de afuera, exilio, barrio, Ignacio E. Lozano, Porfirista.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Mexican exile activity in the United States during the early twentieth century is typically associated with the Mexican Revolution of the 1910s and the Cristero War of

1926-1929. As the Mexican government worked to censor criticism, journalists found a safe haven in the United States where they were generally protected by neutrality laws. Consequently, Mexican newspaper activity flourished across the U.S. Southwest. Newspapers were the most important medium for disseminating information to *el México de afuera* (“Mexico outside of Mexico”), promoting cultural retention in the face of Anglo racism, and assuaging some of the nostalgia for *la patria*. Historian Richard Griswold del Castillo notes that during the Mexican Revolution, it was the “newspaper editors who reacted to events in writing, articulating the community’s position regarding violence, Mexican nationalism and Anglo-American intervention” (42). In the 1910s and 1920s, Mexican exiles reacted to the deterritorialization forced upon them and the movement north of *la frontera*. However, the exiles who remained in the United States in the 1930s witnessed a new form of deterritorialization —the repatriation of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans to Mexico. In 1929, as the U.S. economy tanked and unemployment rose, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) undertook an effort to ‘encourage’ Mexicans to return to Mexico. Scholars estimate that in less than a decade, “at least 1,000,000 Mexican Nationals and Mexican Americans had been forcibly expelled or scare headed [sic] into going to Mexico,” and almost all deportations occurred through Texas and California (Balderrama and Rodríguez 339).

These two states were at the center of Mexican newspaper activity. *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*, established by exile Ignacio E. Lozano, were among the top-selling Spanish-language newspapers in the United States. Lozano established *La Prensa* in 1913 in San Antonio, Texas. In 1926 he founded *La Opinión* in Los Angeles, in an effort to broaden his readership. Lozano was a *Porfirista*, part of the exile community who opposed the Mexican Revolution while remaining loyal to the dictators Porfirio Díaz and Victoriano Huerta. Exiled Porfiristas, including Querido Moheno and Nemesio García Naranjo, frequently contributed to the two newspapers, and Mexican intellectual José Vasconcelos hailed Lozano’s newspapers as “an intellectual light” for the immigrant population (García 223). From its inception, *La Prensa* expressed a desire to be “un verdadero amigo” for its readers (*La Prensa* 13 February 1913). Lozano and his staff carried out the newspaper’s mission by bringing attention to local problems and international conflicts, while encouraging readers to actively participate in their communities and become educated. News from Mexico dominated headlines and editorials. Between 1913 and 1920, *La Prensa* focused mainly on the Mexican Revolution and World War I. In the late 1920s, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión*

were extremely critical of Mexican President Plutarco Elías Calles for his anti-clerical policies (as many Porfiristas were devoutly Catholic). However, the Great Depression presented a turning point for these newspapers from exile to barrio concerns because of the severe economic downturn and the repatriation/deportation policies in the United States.

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* served as activist media in the 1930s, but complex identity politics motivated this activism. Lozano and his staff represented Mexico's pre-Revolution elite, self-proclaimed "gente decente" who were nationalist, rejected notions of *mestizaje* (the combination of Mexico's European and indigenous pasts) and *indigenismo*, opposed acculturation and assimilation, and sought to impose their notions of 'progress' and 'civilization' on residents of the barrios (García 237). This group, known in San Antonio as the *ricos*, became a decreasing minority in the years following the Mexican Revolution, and they represented ideals vastly different from what historian Richard A. García refers to as the growing "Mexican American middle class" across the United States. Lozano and his staff constantly had to engage in identity negotiation. Though they now had families and 'roots' in the United States, the *ricos* continued to call themselves exiles, worked to maintain their status as the *gente decente*, resisted acculturation, and kept *el México de afuera* thriving in the United States. Yet their newspapers (and jobs) depended almost entirely on selling advertisement space to U.S. businesses. The internal conflicts produced by the constant identity negotiation were augmented by the effects of the Great Depression.

By 1930, Lozano and his contemporaries experienced political and economic security in the United States. They had successful businesses, worked in fields such as journalism and medicine, and were raising children who were U.S. citizens. The economic crisis and subsequent repatriation policies, however, dismantled that security found in exile. Lozano reacted by maintaining the semblance of stability in his newspapers—limiting changes to the editorial content, reporting news on the financial crisis and repatriation without attacking the U.S. government, and encouraging local activism. This stance ensured the survival of Lozano's newspapers while giving him and his staff a forum for helping their community.

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* published similar editorials and headlines, though the local reports covered news stories in Texas and California, respectively. Between 1930 and 1932, these newspapers focused on repatriation, unemployment, and the conflicts between native Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. I will examine these media using the framework of cultural studies, which Barbie Zelizer suggests "considers the

meanings, symbols and symbolic systems, ideologies, rituals and conventions by which journalists maintain their cultural authority as spokespeople for events in the public domain” (101). I argue that the content of these newspapers provides insight into the reactions to repatriation by a group of opinion leaders in the *barrios*. Moreover, this analysis incorporates the 1930s into the narrative of Mexican exile. Scholars have increasingly studied the effects of repatriation on the lives and collective conscious of Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. The reactions of Porfirista exiles expelled from their homeland two decades prior offer an important perspective.

## 2. REPORTS AND EDITORIALS ON REPATRIATION

At the onset of the Great Depression, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* averaged between eight and ten pages daily, with longer Sunday editions. The newspapers contained a number of columns, including an editorial page, *Información Gráfica Mundial*, *Sección Histórica*, *Página del Hogar y Sociedad*, sports, and classifieds sections. Although both newspapers included world news, reports from Mexico dominated headlines, even during the Stock Market Crash at the end of October 1929. *La Prensa* only published a photo of the panic on Wall Street in late October, and Lozano’s newspapers did not discuss the economic downturn until November, in an editorial on the closure of several banks throughout the United States (*La Prensa* 29 October 1929). *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* actually depicted a highly-optimistic attitude towards the end of the year, with articles and illustrations dealing with happiness and prosperity. One article described how society was undergoing “una edad de oro porque el mayor número de gentes será feliz. Es la edad de oro porque será la edad del contento universal” (*La Prensa* 11 November 1929). The ‘age of universal content’ seemed to apply to San Antonio at the beginning of 1930. According to *La Prensa*, the city was prospering economically. A number of prominent merchants set up businesses in the city, and the local radio station WOAI had one of the world’s most powerful radio signals at the time (*La Prensa* 16 March 1930). However, the effects of the Great Depression eventually overshadowed this prosperity.

By March 1930, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* began to address the problems associated with unemployment. An article addressing poverty in San Antonio quoted a federal employee saying that many workers, particularly immigrant *braceros*, simply refused certain jobs because of poor working conditions (*La Prensa* 3 April 1930). Adding to the plight of many immigrants were the massive deportations taking place across the United States. One of the first repatriations reported in Lozano’s newspapers

dealt with the expulsion of 500 Mexican students from El Paso, Texas, because of their ‘illegal’ status in the United States. According to *La Prensa*, the number of repatriated had reached 12,000 within a month. The newspaper did not provide many details, but reports on repatriation always included a call for the Mexican government to help ‘their own.’ *La Opinión* followed suit stating, “si algo nos gustaría que el mexicano imitase del estadounidense, sería su facultad organizadora”. The editorials strongly encouraged the residents of the Mexican *barrios* in California to organize and help their compatriots struggling financially; collective activism would be the only way for Mexicans to help themselves (*La Opinión* 11 March 1930). *La Prensa* set this example by offering to let anyone in need of a job in San Antonio and surrounding towns to advertise their services free of charge (*La Prensa* 3 April 1930).

Lozano and his staff also denounced two projects presented to the U.S. Congress by Representative John C. Box and Senator Fred Harris. Box and Harris attempted to resolve the ‘Mexican problem’ by proposing immigration quotas for Mexicans entering the United States. *La Prensa* denounced these proposals as “una falta de justicia” because they disproportionately targeted Mexicans. *La Opinión* even suggested that these quotas could potentially damage the peaceful relationship between the United States and Mexico (*La Prensa* 13 May 1930). However, the newspapers also argued that the Mexican government should take responsibility for helping repatriated Mexicans, stating:

Sí puede el gobierno [Mexicano] pedir que los procedimientos suavicen; que a los acusados se les dé tiempo y facilidades para que comprueben que viven aquí igualmente, ya que muchos de ellos el único error en que han incurrido ha sido perder sus documentos, y les conmine para que abandonen el país en plazo razonable, sobre todo cuando tengan familia, a fin de que en lo posible se preparen contra los padecimientos que ahora aquejan a los que se hallan a lo largo de la línea divisoria. (*La Opinión* 3 April 1930)

Repatriation and immigration issues reflected broader problems impacting the U.S. Mexican community in 1930. According to *La Prensa*, in Denver, Colorado, 20,000 Mexican laborers struggled for better working conditions (*La Opinión* 28 May 1930). Children were also affected, and one article described the humiliation faced by Mexican and African-American children forced to attend low-quality schools in a poor neighborhood without paved roads or sanitation systems (*La Opinión* 9 June 1930). Even Lozano faced obstacles. Both *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* were included in a list of publications banned in Mexico because of their criticism against the Mexican government. Lozano’s staff considered this an attack on the “libertad de prensa y

pensamiento,” and it reinforced their identity as political exiles (*La Prensa* 29 April 1930). By the end of 1930, it seemed as if *el México de afuera* was being attacked politically, economically, and socially on both sides of the border. The people who fled to the U.S. during the Mexican Revolution and Cristero War collectively experienced unilateral deterritorialization that forced them out of their homeland. Now, many Mexicans were experiencing bilateral deterritorialization, being pushed and pulled across a political and cultural border into spaces where they were unable to fully belong.

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* consistently listed statistical figures related to the escalating deportations, and the numbers ranged between 100 and several thousand. *La Opinión* stated that in 1930, 40,000 Mexicans had reportedly returned to Mexico through Texas, and the deportations were putting a strain on the city of El Paso. *La Opinión* published information about police raids in Los Angeles, the names of deportees from southern California, and efforts by merchants to protest the deportations which hurt commerce (*La Opinión* 15 February 1931). Though infrequent, both newspapers printed editorials with commentary about the repatriation policies. One article lamented the deportation of families who could not afford to relocate in Mexico (*La Opinión* 12 January 1931). Other editorials suggested that Mexico could benefit if repatriated Mexicans implemented the wisdom and skills they acquired in the United States (*La Opinión* 24 March 1931). Despite this attempt to find a positive angle to repatriation, most articles and editorials in Lozano’s newspaper on this topic had a negative tone, augmented by dire financial news and reports on suicide. For example, on December 14, 1930, *La Prensa* reported that El Paso resident Florentino Velarde shot and killed himself after struggling with illness and depression related to his financial situation (*La Prensa* 15 December 1930). This would not be the last report of a suicide attributed to the economic crisis<sup>1</sup> (*La Prensa* 11 January 1931).

The situation for Mexicans in the United States worsened in 1931, as the agricultural industry declined and unemployment increased. Vast numbers of Mexicans in Texas were leaving large metropolitan areas including Dallas, Houston, and Austin, and smaller towns such as Marfa, Big Spring, Presidio, Pecos, Waco, and Galveston. *La Prensa* discussed the plight of Mexicans arriving at the Texas/Mexico border to be deported, stating that:

en su inmensa mayoría esos compatriotas llegan a nuestros puertos en condiciones económicas de tal manera aflictivas, que no solo carecen de medios para hacer sus gastos de transporte de la frontera a los lugares de donde salieron para venir a los Estados Unidos, sino aun de medios para atender las necesidades de su alimentación. (*La Prensa* 25 March 1931)

The situation for those leaving the United States was often considered desperate, and it seemed that U.S. President Herbert Hoover was doing little to help the U.S. population in general. Consequently, the Mexican government stepped in to help deportees by reducing or eliminating train fares to Mexico and by sending special trains to Ciudad Juárez and Nuevo Laredo for the transport of repatriated Mexicans (*La Opinión* 2 April 1931). Lozano and his staff, Mexican consuls, and mutual aid societies also worked to provide relief for the deportees arriving in Texas from across the country. Dances were sponsored in San Antonio to raise funds to help those returning to Mexico (*La Prensa* 19 July 1931). On September 20, 1931, *La Prensa* reported that 21,429 residents had been repatriated through Laredo, Texas. One week later, *La Prensa* reported that a group of 800 families (almost 4,000 individuals) were returning to Mexico because of the agricultural downturn in Texas. These families had no access to transportation; therefore, they planned to return to Mexico on foot. The Mexican consul in San Antonio called on residents of the city to transport their compatriots. Residents of the border region responded and *La Prensa* printed various photographs of the long caravans transporting people across the border.

*La Opinión* pointed out an important difference in the experiences within the Mexican “colonies” in Los Angeles compared to those in San Antonio and El Paso. An editorial entitled “La Casa del Mexicano,” informed readers of the construction of this building, sponsored by the Mexican Consulate, which would serve as a meeting place for various Mexican organizations. It also pointed out that the Mexican community in Los Angeles was not as united as those in San Antonio and El Paso, perhaps because Los Angeles was larger and had multiple *barrios*. The author stressed the importance of uniting all Mexican in Los Angeles, arguing that this would improve the charitable efforts meant to help deportees (*La Opinión* 9 April 1931). This effort, in particular, exemplified the attitude taken by Lozano and his staff during this time period — *el México de afuera* needed to fend for itself.

Outside of California and Texas, the city of Chicago garnered much attention from *La Prensa*; the newspaper reported that over 21,000 Mexicans lived in the city, fifty percent unemployed (*La Opinión* 29 November 1931). Two major deportation drives, one in 1926 and the other in 1931, caused panic among Chicago’s Mexican population. According to the Immigrants’ Protective League (IPL), an organization that worked to benefit immigrants in Chicago, these drives:

Achieved spectacular publicity, aroused a wave of unwholesome and dangerous anti-alien sentiment and resulted in the oppression of law-abiding



foreign-born residents [...] rather than in the detection of the serious crimes from which the community needed protection. (Horak 3)

The deportation drives resulted in the vast reduction of the Mexican population in Chicago, and *La Prensa* reported on the caravans of deportees traveling from Chicago to Texas.

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* continued to chronicle the effects of the Great Depression across the United States in 1932. Photographs depicted events such as a food drive in Pocatello, Idaho, a speech against poor working conditions in Kentucky mines, and the expulsion of fifteen families from their homes in the Bronx in New York City (*La Prensa* 21 March 1931; 15 January 1932; 30 March 1932). News articles described the economic situation in cities such as Detroit, where over 500,000 people were unemployed (*La Prensa* 2 January 1932). Reports on suicides related to financial difficulties also became more common. For example, José González, a resident of Waelder, Texas, shot himself in the forehead, Chicago advertising agent Clarencio E. Brinkerhoff hung himself, a young man shot himself in Piedras Negras, Coahuila, Mexico, and José García, a 51 year-old Brownsville resident died as a result of a self-inflicted razor wound (*La Prensa* 20 January 1932).

Between late 1929 and 1931, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* did not offer extensive commentary on U.S. President Herbert Hoover, focusing instead on Mexican politics. However, in 1932, Lozano's newspapers openly criticized of Hoover while expressing support for presidential candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt. *La Prensa's* editorials blamed the Hoover administration for the widespread suffering throughout the United States because of policies such as opposing bonuses for veterans and an insistence on balancing the federal budget instead of spending on economic relief programs (*La Prensa* 6 April 1932). In a radio address to the nation, presidential cabinet member Owen D. Young asked all U.S. citizens to help fight the effects of the Depression, particularly unemployment. Young, speaking on behalf of Hoover, said that citizens should not worry "porque ciertas gentes perezosas, que nunca se preocupan por sí mismas, reciban parte de estos fondos". The administration blamed current levels of unemployment on laziness, but as Young stated, "es mucho mejor que algunos perezosos reciban dávidas generosas y no que por evitarlo una persona de conciencia, que quiere y puede trabajar, pero que no tiene trabajo, sufra miseria" (*La Prensa* 30 March 1932). Despite the seeming indifference from the federal government, groups struggling because of the Depression achieved certain victories, and on June 19-20, 1932, *La Prensa* and

*La Opinión* published photos of the Bonus Army, a group of veterans who won their bonuses after marching on Washington, D.C.

Before 1932, Lozano and his staff worked extensively to help residents of the Mexican “colonies,” but now Lozano’s businesses struggled, especially with the rise in postage prices in July. Staff used advertising space to ask their subscribers to pay their fees on time. In June, *La Prensa* included a long plea to subscribers, stating that:

A pesar de la depresión económica, que ha afectado a todas las empresas, [*La Prensa*] ha seguido fiel a su programa de constante mejoramiento y no solo no ha sacrificado ninguno de los servicios que le han dado prestigio y popularidad, sino que los ha reforzado constantemente a favor del público que la lee. De allí que nos creamos justificados apelando a nuestros suscriptores solicitando su cooperación en la más adecuada de las formas:  cubriendo puntualmente el importe de la suscripción. (26 June 1932)

However, besides this request, *La Prensa* made no other mention of difficulties it faced. In fact, as the year progressed, Lozano’s newspapers deemphasized the effects of the Great Depression and only sporadically mentioned repatriation. This sudden shift in focus illustrates the complex dynamics Lozano and his staff faced as opinion leaders in the *barrios*. More importantly, this demonstrates the complexities of living in Mexican *barrios* during this period.

### 3. *LA PRENSA* AND *LA OPINIÓN* RESPOND TO THE GREAT DEPRESSION

According to Peter Parisi, news writing from a cultural studies perspective:

represents a set of choices...(a) that define an issue as newsworthy and certain questions as relevant; (b) admit, mute, or reject information, sources, and perspectives; and (c) decide the level and extent of detail and ‘color’ with which to render a person, community, region, or issue.” (Parisi 8)

Journalists give meaning to words and events by creating narratives that explain the world to their readers. Scholars Martin Eide and Graham Knight expand Parisi’s notions by discussing service journalism, which “represents the development of a hybrid social identity —part citizen, part consumer, part client— that is oriented to resolving the problems of everyday life in ways that can combine individualistic and collective, political forms of response” (527). *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* were service-oriented media, demonstrated by the staff’s efforts to incorporate readers into public discourse and activism. But the newspapers’ position in barrio society was more complicated. The situation faced by Mexicans in the United States between 1929 and 1930 forced members of this community to re-negotiate their identities and their ‘place’ in both

U.S. and Mexican societies. These negotiations played out in the pages of Lozano's newspapers, exemplified not only by the content of the publications, but also by what was "missing" from the newspapers.

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* formed as part of what Mark Deuze calls "participatory media culture." They were "bottom-up" facilitators and moderators of "community-level conversations among citizens, rather than functioning as top-down storytellers" that disassociated themselves from the audience (275). Through sponsoring fundraisers, Mexican holiday celebrations, beauty contests, and writing competitions, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* encouraged readers to play an active role within their communities. More importantly, they stressed cultural continuity and the retention of Mexican identity among immigrants and their U.S.-born children. Lozano had to carefully balance the resistance to acculturation and assimilation with the realities of living in the United States and being exposed to American popular culture. Although his newspapers reported mostly news from Mexico, they also included entertainment, sports, and fashion columns featuring U.S. popular culture. By 1930, it seemed that *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* had successfully struck that balance. Contributors to the newspapers, many of them Porfiristas, never fully accepted the revolutionary regime. Those who resided in the United States enjoyed a level of protection where they could openly criticize the Mexican government from their position in exile, all while simultaneously enjoying Mexican and American popular culture. However, the Great Depression represented the first major threat to *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* within the United States.

Open critiques against the U.S. government for the repatriation policies were noticeably absent from Lozano's newspapers in 1930 and 1931. Although a few reports addressed the immigration quotas, the overwhelming majority of editorials discussed Mexican politics. The editorials that addressed repatriation commented on the plight of deportees and ways in which the community and Mexican government could assist them. Furthermore, the statistical reports on the number of deportees rarely appeared as front-page headlines; these accounts were relegated to the second or third pages, and they were almost non-existent by the end of 1932. These reports and stories about deportation drives referenced various cities, including El Paso and Laredo in Texas, and Chicago and Detroit in the Midwest. Deportation drives in San Antonio, however, were not mentioned. Moreover, reports and photographs depicting economic struggles around the U.S. were few, and as previously stated, *La Prensa* did not allude to its own financial difficulties until 1932. The Great Depression forced Lozano into a precarious political and economic situation; yet, as América Rodríguez argues, the newspaper

“remained nonconfrontational and optimistic, supporting the Mexican government’s department of repatriation, which promised work camps in Mexico for the deportees” (19). It was also non-confrontational toward the U.S. government until the election year of 1932, when the repatriation/immigration policies (and the stakes for Mexicans) could potentially change with Roosevelt’s presidential victory.

The first issue of *La Prensa* in 1913 contained the motto “¡Venimos a Luchar!” This slogan inspired the newspaper staff’s activism and efforts for the progress of Mexican immigrants. By the 1930s, Lozano was considered a leading figure in *el México de afuera*, and he received accolades for his work in the Mexican *barrios* across the United States. In July 1930, the *Amigos de la América Latina* held a reception in New York City in honor of Lozano, celebrating the significance of his newspapers in the United States (*La Prensa* 9 July 1930). One year later, professional violinist Ricardo A. Valles composed a march entitled “Lozano,” in honor of the editor (*La Prensa* 13 August 1931). Despite the success of Lozano’s *lucha*, the Mexican government banned his newspapers because they were considered too radical and part of the “periodismo de combate” (*La Opinión* 31 December 1931). In the United States, as Secretary of Labor Doak made clear, enemies of the state were fit for deportation. If the Mexican government was familiar with Lozano’s work, U.S. officials likely were, as well, and perhaps Lozano and his staff ran the risk of deportation if they vocalized any extensive and/or extreme rhetoric against deportation. In fact, the newspapers rarely used the word “deportation,” opting instead for “repatriation,” a less antagonistic term. If they were deported, they would face the hostility of the same Mexican government that charged them with treason and ordered their exile in 1914.<sup>2</sup> In effect, Lozano and his colleagues had no homeland to return to. Thus, *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* maintained a non-combative stance in an effort to call less negative attention to themselves and lower any risk for deportation.

Moreover, Lozano’s staff continued to focus on popular culture in an effort to cheer up their audience, and perhaps to maintain the status quo during this period of backlash against Mexicans in the United States. In August 1930, Lozano announced the addition of “grandes mejoras” to both newspapers, which included Sunday editions “con un mínimo de 44 páginas, compuestas de rotograbado, dos magazines, uno en tamaño ordinario y otro en tabloide y novedosas secciones de información” (*La Prensa* 17 August 1930). Even when Lozano asked readers for timely subscription payments in 1932, he stated his wish to continue printing his newspapers without reducing them in any way. The new sections of the newspapers included mostly elements of U.S. popular culture, such as images of movie stars such as Charlie Chaplin and Clara Bow. *La Prensa*

and *La Opinión* continued to feature Mexican and Catholic holidays, with extensive articles and illustrations paying tribute to Holy Week, Mexican Independence, and historical leaders such as Porfirio Díaz. Daily and weekend editions included recipes and articles related to women's issues, sports news (particularly baseball), children's stories, world literature, and cartoons featuring characters such as *El Ratón Miguelito* (Mickey Mouse). Furthermore, advertising did not diminish despite the economic downturn. Cigarettes, clothing, and medicine were among the products frequently advertised, illustrating the symbiotic relationship between advertisers and Lozano as they all supported each others' businesses. It did not seem that Lozano's businesses were struggling, until he announced it in 1932.

The difference between the image presented by Lozano and the reality of his businesses illustrates the importance of *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* as part of the public sphere in the *barrios*. Jürgen Habermas' revised notions of the public sphere recognize "the more differentiated, pluralistic character of the public sphere, and the ability of actors who lack resources to have an effective influence on public opinion formation and political decision-making, despite the structural odds" (Eide and Knight 538). The self-censorship practiced by Lozano and his staff in regards to the circumstances surrounding Mexican repatriations demonstrates that community leaders were able to work within the *barrios* to help Mexicans, but it became more difficult to be active *beyond* the *barrios*. *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* embodied displacement, but the newspapers found a way to organize relief efforts while avoiding negative repercussions from the U.S. government.

Lozano's limited changes to the editorial content of his newspapers had two other practical benefits. Lozano retained subscriptions and kept his businesses afloat, and subscribers continued to receive newspapers that were informative but also provided an escape. The continued focus on news from Mexico, the deportation rhetoric consisting of quantitative reports rather than policy critiques, and the columns dedicated to popular culture allowed *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* to retain elements of the optimism of the 1920s. This proved to be the publications' key methods for easing the burdens of life in the *barrios* while remaining true to their mission. On most days, signs of the Great Depression and repatriation were minimal in Lozano's newspapers. After 1932, these symbols were almost non-existent, even though repatriations continued through the remainder of the decade. *La Prensa* and *La Opinión* provided an escape for readers where they could briefly forget about unemployment, deportations, and economic devastation. The intellectual sphere in the *barrios* now functioned as a space in which Mexicans could find some relief from the Great Depression.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

*La Prensa* and *La Opinión* were the most important intellectual and cultural media for Mexicans north of the U.S./Mexico border during the first half of the twentieth century. After *La Prensa's* suspension in 1963, *La Opinión* continued to carry on Lozano's mission, and it remains one of the top-selling Spanish-language newspapers in the United States. For historians of the Mexican experience in the United States, these newspapers are highly valuable sources. Because of their longevity that has spanned decades, Lozano's publications offer a broad scope of the continuities and changes within *el México de afuera*. They also demonstrate how Mexican immigrants adapted to life in the United States during periods of peace and prosperity, and during periods of adversity such as the Great Depression.

Between 1930 and 1932, the global economic crisis and repatriation policies in the United States forced Lozano, his staff, and *el México de afuera* to depend largely on themselves for political, economic, and social support and advocacy. However, the repatriation policies destabilized notions of "home," and the Porfirista exiles were challenged to help their compatriots without risking deportation to the country they longed for but could not return to. Lozano's staff rose to the challenge by maintaining a sense of familiarity with readers, offering some stability in the midst of chaos and struggle.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> According to the report, the fifty-two year-old mayor of San Angelo, Texas, who was sick and depressed, jumped off of the sixth floor of a bank.

<sup>2</sup> In December 1914, Venustiano Carranza's government compiled a list of 364 people who had supported Díaz and Huerta. Based on a law passed on January 25, 1862, these people could be charged and executed for treason for disturbing public order.