

Why DO People Come Here?*

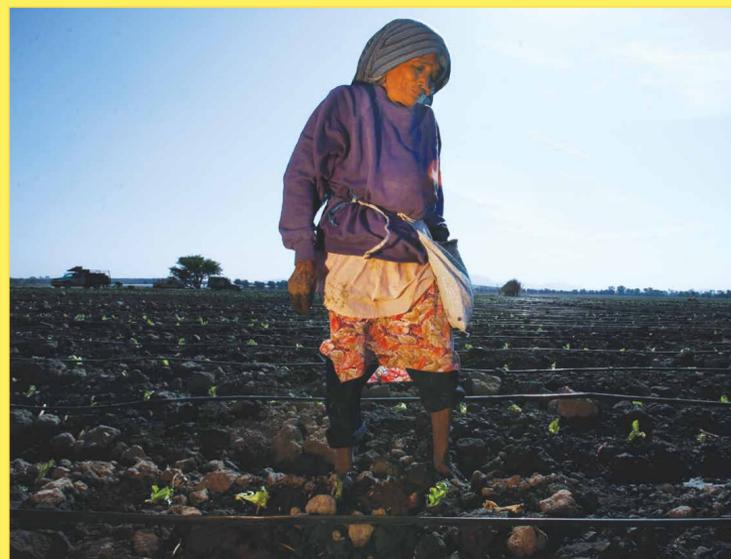
Why do people come to America? Because the capitalist-imperialist system of the United States has messed up the rest of the world even worse than what it has done in this country. One example—among many—is Mexico.

1. 150 years ago, after Mexico became independent from Spain, the United States waged war on Mexico and stole a large part of its territory. This stolen territory includes what is now Arizona, New Mexico, and parts of California, Colorado, Nevada and Utah. One of the main reasons behind this was that slave owners in the southern U.S. needed more land.

The U.S. replaced Spain and other European colonial powers as the alien force dominating Mexico. Despite the Mexican Revolution in the early 1900s, the masses and other sections of the people have continued to be exploited and down pressed, while their country is plundered by the United States.



2. Throughout the 20th century, U.S. capital expanded into and increasingly dominated the Mexican economy. Today, financial institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund—which are dominated by the U.S.—pressure the Mexican government to promote farm crops that can be sold on the world market and industry that uses low-paid, super-exploited Mexican labor to produce low-cost goods for the world market. Land and resources have been shifted away from basic food production and the Mexican economy is distorted to serve the demands of international imperialist capital.



2008. 74-year-old woman working on a lettuce plantation belonging to a U.S. owned company near San Miguel de Allende in central Mexico. American companies farm more than 45,000 acres of land in three Mexican states, employing about 11,000 people, according to a 2007 survey by the U.S. farm group Western Growers.

3. Since the 1994 North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA, signed between the U.S., Mexico and Canada), U.S. imperialism has more fully penetrated the economy and other spheres of Mexican society. NAFTA ordered the Mexican government to drastically cut farm subsidies to small farmers. But meanwhile, in the U.S., agricultural exporters continue to receive the equivalent of \$10 billion in subsidies per year. When the tariffs protecting Mexican corn and beans were lifted under NAFTA in early 2008, production of these crops further collapsed under the flood of imports. Farmers could no longer support themselves, and over six million peasants were driven off the land. People have been forced by the workings of imperialism to seek a livelihood in the cities inside Mexico, the northern border region, and the United States.

NAFTA has also caused the worsening of the situation of the masses in the urban areas—with some 60% of the employment being in the informal sector (street vendors, for example). In 2004, 10 years into NAFTA, nearly 30 percent of Mexico's population was living on less than \$1 a day. In Mexico, only one-third of new job seekers entering the employment market will find a job.

Though there are still great pressures on people to go to the U.S. to look for work, in recent years the economic crisis within the U.S. has further twisted the lives of the immigrants. There has been an important decrease in remesas, the money immigrants send to their families in Mexico. Some have returned to Mexico due to lack of work and increased official persecution. Still others must ask their families in Mexico to send them money to survive in the U.S., as they try to hang on for "better times"—since there is nothing back in Mexico for them.

People from Mexico's rural areas make up 44 percent of the migrants to the U.S. Other immigrants used to work in Mexico's domestic industries—but these closed down when the capitalists sought lower-paid workers elsewhere, or left for other reasons. Doctors, professors and others—finding no options for their studies or work in Mexico—come to the U.S. in search of a life.

4. Through all this, hundreds of thousands of peasants, manual laborers, professionals and others have been forced to leave their homes. They must look for work or a future, and search for ways to survive, in the United States. Here they face intense and brutal discrimination and exploitation—working in low-wage factory and field jobs or finding their college studies are only good enough here to drive a taxi or sweep floors. And all live in fear every day that they will be fired because they are immigrants or rounded up by the immigration police.

The complexity of a mass of 12 million Mexican immigrants in the U.S. pulls in many directions. U.S. imperialism needs the cheap labor power, but also wants to have control of this part of the population. The U.S. rulers also want to keep things "stable" within Mexico; but the attacks on immigrants, the disruption of the flow of remesas and the forced return back across the border are affecting the whole social fabric in Mexico.

But this mass of immigrants in the U.S. is a positive thing for the revolution. The stand of the movement we are building for revolution is clear: to welcome such immigrants as brothers and sisters... to insist on equality of nations, including equality in culture and language, and to learn from and take joy in cultural exchange... to stand with them as they oppose repression... to draw on their desire for revolution and their experience living in countries oppressed by imperialism, encouraging them to get into the movement for revolution and to take up, and spread the word on the leadership of Bob Avakian.

Background: 2010. Heading for El Norte along the tracks on the outskirts of Mexico City. Photo: AP

* The text and photos on this page were inspired by a chapter of a film of a talk by Bob Avakian, *Revolution: Why It's Necessary, Why It's Possible, What It's All About*, where he talks about "Why Do People Come Here From All Over the World?" available at revolutiontalk.net.