The Depression

Economic collapse

Domestic causes

Industrial expansion and overproduction

Agricultural overproduction and decline

International causes

World War I and reparations

Urbanization

The Depression led to a transformation of the Mexican community from rural to urban

The Depression was a catalyst to this urbanization

According to Gonzales true urbanization occurred during this time (beginning in 1920s)

This follows general trend of urbanization in US

Gonzales talks about Mexican Americans who did have farms and ranches such as in New Mexico began to lose them during the Depression

However this was a general widespread trend in US

The Mexican population of Denver doubled in 1930s

The old Urban barrios in LA, San Antonio, El Paso, etc. grew

As suburbanization increased, Mexicans began to form new barrios, such as East LA

However, much of the barrio population continued to be migrant labor during this time, contributing to instability in the communities

The Midwest

Railroad and farm labor continued to be the basis of the Mexican community in the Midwest during the late 1920s and 1930s

Nevertheless, Mexicans began to be recruited to work in industrial factories during the 1920s

The Detroit community expanded as Ford hired Mexican workers

Mexican auto workers also fanned out across Michigan to Flint, Pontiac, Saginaw, etc.

Chicago became the largest center of Mexican migration in Midwest

Hub of railroad network and center of heavy industry

Steel, meatpacking

South Chicago towards the Indiana border

There is a debate over the nature of Midwestern Mexican immigrant life

Different or similar to Southwester Mexican society?

Differences:

More heavily urbanized

Received higher wages and education

Less isolated from other ethnicities

Higher levels of intermarriage or exogamy

Farther distance from Mexico made it more difficult to maintain ties with ancestral traditions

Greater assimilation

Greater use of English

Similarities:

Assimilation rate may not have been that much different

Discrimination at similar levels

The development of ethnic communities or barrios

The development of Mexican nationalism

The development of religious, patriotic, and ethnic mutual aid societies

The Mexican Problem

The collapse of the economy contributed to the scarcity of jobs

This exacerbated ethnic tensions

During the 1930s the presence of Mexican workers began to be considered problematic for economic recovery

Mexican workers represented unskilled labor and were considered to be helping hold down wages

The stereotype of Mexicans was that they were driving down wages and that they were an unrestrained population

These sentiments gave rise to calls for the removal of Mexican immigrants from US

Repatriation

It's estimated that one-third of Mexican immigration left the country voluntarily or involuntarily

Some say figure is closer to half

In 1931 the Roosevelt administration launched a deportation drive in Southern California

Perhaps the highest level of repatriation occurred in the Midwest

Much of repatriation was voluntary

One cause of repatriation was the AAA which took a large amount of farm land out of production

Unintended consequence

Dust Bowl Migration

Labor Strife and the Labor Movement

Increase in labor union activity

Mexicans generally excluded from labor unions

Mexican workers often acted on their own

Mutual aid societies became the bases of Mexican labor organization

Clifton and Morenci strike in Arizona 1915 was an example of this type of organization

This activity encouraged Mexican and American workers to cooperate

In the 1930s there was a lot of activity by communist organizations to organize Mexican labor