

The Release from Deception

How Will Americans Overcome Their Xenophobia This Time Around?

By Gonzalo Santos, 12/18/24

Judging from the election results of 2024, the majority of Americans are clearly gripped and deeply afflicted, once again - exactly as they did one hundred years ago in entirely different circumstances - by the widespread, palpable fear and loathing of foreigners coming to their shores or living in their midst.

Analyzing how badly Americans fell last time for this most American syndrome of mass deception and hysteria that posits that ordinary immigrants constitute an “existential threat” to their and their mighty nation’s well-being, such that their mere presence constitutes an urgent and grave social “problem” that requires taking extreme draconian exclusionary measures to “solve,” may be the wisest thing we can do now. Besides making all necessary preparations to resolutely resist the incoming assaults on immigrant communities by the most anti-immigrant administration ever, we need to understand how it came to be that we as a country fell for it again and try to figure out a way out of our present steep descent into virulent, legalized, state-enforced, violent xenophobia.

We start by going back one hundred years, and even more. What happened on the immigration front in the first two decades of the 20th Century has its roots to what happened to the country after the U.S. Civil war settled the divisive issue of slavery once and for all. A new era of continental growth and nation-building took off, premised on state-sponsored westward homestead and railroad expansion, Indigenous ethnic cleansing, massive British capital investments, protectionist trade policies, and a wide-open immigration regime solely for Europeans – the only ones eligible for citizenship per the 1790 Naturalization Act.

The initial full inclusion of the 5.4 million freed African Americans in 1870 soon led to their forced sociopolitical subordination and exclusion (the Jim Crow era), geographic containment in the agrarian South, and intensive “sharecropping” labor exploitation. The surviving quarter-million Native Americans by 1900 were rounded up and concentrated in appalling, militarily controlled reservations. 25 million Europeans, on the other hand, arrived in this period after the Civil War and before World War I and freely spread from coast to coast, providing the muscle and brawn for the rapid industrialization and demographic growth of the country, which went from 39 million in 1870 to 99 million in 1914. By then, the United States had surpassed every other country economically and was well on its way to replacing Great Britain as the great global hegemonic power in the world.

On the domestic front, social polarization along racial, class, and immigrant status lines had sharpened. The Statue of Liberty was dedicated in 1886 on the New York harbor as a welcoming symbol to essentially all European immigrants that could make the oceanic voyage (though not the Chinese, who had by then been excluded from coming four years

prior). Jewish American Emma Lazarus's stirring poem was added to its base in 1903 proclaiming,

*"...Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"*

This poem, and the boiling immigrant cauldron of New York City at the time, in turn inspired Jewish British author Israel Zangwill's 1908 celebratory play *The Melting Pot*, which was a hit in New York but not in the nation's heartland. The country at large – still mostly rural and overwhelmingly White Anglo-Saxon Protestant or WASP - was beginning to move in the *opposite, more restrictionist direction*, as evidenced by the string of anti-immigrant laws that began to be adopted at that time. Anti-immigrant sentiment reached a high, near hysteric pitch just prior to World War I, which interrupted the free migration flows from Europe, but recommenced immediately after the war was over in 1918.

By 1924, the WASP-dominated Congress – with only a handful of non-WASP white representatives, no Blacks or Asians in the federal legislature and just two Hispanics, none Mexican American – easily passed (308–62 in the House, 69–9 in the Senate), the most restrictionist immigration law in the nation's history, before or after.

Well into the 20th Century, why was this retrograde social disaster even allowed to happen? Perhaps because it came after half-a-century of strident, relentless agitation by an alliance of powerful social actors: the know-nothings nativists and populists scapegoating immigrants, Protestant religious zealots harboring anti-Catholic and anti-Semitic prejudices, white supremacists from every region in the country alarmed at the “swarthy” not-quite white incomers from Southern and Eastern Europe, respectable “scientific” eugenicists and WASP intellectuals from the most prestigious universities that had “proof” of the hereditary inferiority and criminality of the new immigrants, the ultra-protectionist AFL labor movement that saw immigrants as strike-breakers and competitors, and even the women suffragette movement and the upright pro-prohibition moral crusaders. The latter two movements finally got their long-sought-after Constitutional amendments – the 19th (1920) & 18th Amendments (1919), respectively – in large part by prominently including stridently anti-immigrant rhetoric to their campaigns.

The capitalist titans of industry, for all their vast economic power and legendary political clout in the money-ruled political duopoly in Washington, lost the prolonged war to secure an unlimited supply of immigrant cheap labor to all the passionate Anglo-Saxon Protestant “culture warriors” of that era and the whites-only AFL working-class union movement (the much more radical and multiracial IWW labor movement having been brutally repressed in the first “Red Scare” period after WW I).

The exclusion categories from entry to the nation, alongside prostitutes, Anarchists, and the physically sick of contagious diseases, were henceforth extended to include almost all

Southern and Eastern Europeans and all Asian immigrants - not just the Chinese. These immigrants would remain strictly barred from legal entry until the immigration law of 1965 re-opened the country to large and generous legal migration flows again.

This dark 41-year period of rampant anti-European and anti-Asian xenophobia and extreme restrictionism explains the callous rejection of boatloads of Jewish and other refugees from the Nazi Holocaust prior to and during World War II. It also explains the slow and relatively small opening of the country to the 12.5 million Western European refugees after that war (between 1948 and 1952 less than 400,000 refugees were resettled in the U.S). With Asians, refugees would only begin to be admitted in the aftermath of the Korean War (1950-53). Filipinos, colonized by the U.S., were brought in as agricultural workers after 1924 as “U.S. nationals”, but soon were targeted for exclusion, too, by a 1935 act of Congress “promising” a future independence; they, too, would remain excludable, despite being - like the Chinese - WW II allies, until 1965. The resident Chinese, Filipinos, and Koreans ineligible for citizenship if not U.S. born, and harshly segregated - were not outright deported solely due to the high cost of transporting them back to their Asian homelands. Japanese Americans – foreign and U.S.-born alike - would be dispossessed and massively interned during WW II.

Ironically - and purely thanks to the clout of agro-industrial interests in the U.S. Southwest (there were no Mexican-American representatives in Congress at the time) – Mexicans, labelled “Western Hemisphere” immigrants in the 1924 law, were *exempted* from exclusion or visa quotas, allowing a continued, informal, circular massive flow of seasonal cheap laborers involving hundreds of thousands of mostly young, male migrants a year, turned on and off at the discretion of the employers, with occasional mass deportations; by 1942, the federal government launched, in a treaty with Mexico, the largest guest worker “Bracero” program in U.S. history – initially sold as a “war emergency” but extended all the way to 1964, precisely the year prior to the end of the 1924 National Quotas Act era. A total of five million male Braceros participated in the 22-year program, mostly in agriculture.

The protectionist and racist U.S. labor movement grudgingly went along this federally subsidized, indentured and regimented cheap labor contract scheme, as long as it stayed restricted to the fields. The problem soon became apparent that increasing numbers of former Braceros would opt – for good reason – to return to the U.S. Southwestern fields *on their own*, without anyone’s “permission” or any “temporary card”, to work with the grower of *their* choosing, at slightly better wages and working conditions – or even move to the great cities in pursuit of much better wages and living conditions.

Beginning in the second decade of the 20th Century, mostly pressured by the AFL, stricter bureaucratic regulations at the U.S.-Mexico border were imposed that sharply restricted free passage of non-contracted workers, which led to the growth of unauthorized, *illegalized* Mexican migration flows, still mostly seasonal and circular. The “Repatriation program” was a successful campaign in the early years of the Great Depression (1930-33) to remove, using a combination of raids and psychological terror tactics, half of the Mexican-origin population – immigrants and U.S. born alike. Two decades later, the federal

“Operation Wetback” in 1954 was a blunt attempt to massively remove unauthorized migrants (labelled and stigmatized as *wetbacks*) and force them to return as Braceros (a process known as “drying them at the border”). None of these restrictionist draconian campaigns worked in the long run. The cat and mouse game between the *Migra* and the Mexican migrants has continued ever since, at the border and in the interior of the country, where *Migra* raids in workplaces and communities became commonplace for most of the 20th Century.

What happened after the supposedly liberal immigration law passed in 1965 is that in fact it *prevented* the establishment of an orderly, legal, labor migration regime capable of handling the *scale* of the well-established migrant flow patterns between Mexico and the U.S. The law unwisely imposed, for the first time ever, severe caps (25K a year) for legal visas for Mexicans, as well as for every other country, all in the name of “fairness” – suddenly transforming the prior large contracted Mexican seasonal labor migration flows into *illegalized, criminalized* migrant flows, still very sought after by U.S. employers. Mexico – by then the number one sender of immigrant workers to the United States - was foolishly assigned the *same* number of immigrant visas than, say, Uruguay, or Argentina, which had practically zero such labor migration flows to the U.S.

That “equality without equity” was the primary source of the growth of the undocumented Mexican population in the United States ever since. The American economy continued to rely, *by design*, on a vast reserve army of *illegalized workers*. This feature of the 1965 law is the single most important source of the political chaos and social polarization that has sparked the largest wave of xenophobia in the country since 1924. It is, most disingenuously, never brought up in the heated debates in Congress or the media.

At the political level, the congressional debate over the 1965 reform, similar to what happened in 1924, had practically *no* Mexican American representation or input (there were only three, highly marginalized Southwestern Mexican American representatives in the House that year). The intense negotiations – led by Irish American Senator Ted Kennedy - were done solely between the dominant WASP establishment politicians and the by-then sizeable block of “white ethnic” representatives. *They* negotiated a new immigration regime meant to lift the stigma of the latter not being *sufficiently white* for practically unrestricted admission to the nation, as WASP immigrants were welcomed (that’s how Donald Trump’s mother migrated from Glasgow in 1930). Asians, allies in WW II and now allies in the Cold War, came next in priority, with reinforced refugee-admission provisions and unlimited family unification visas. Young single Mexican male workers without any family in the U.S. – the bulk of these labor migrants – got *one-sixteenth* of the visas that previously went to the Bracero program at its peak.

The result was three-fold: the much prophesized upsurge of European immigration after 1965 did not materialize – Western Europeans were busy reconstructing their own countries and Eastern Europeans were held captive to the Soviet camp; the Asian and Latin American legal migration flows did increase dramatically, thanks to the newly enshrined

principle of family unification, for which there were no visa caps; but a time bomb began to tick within the regional North American *labor* migration regime.

Mexico's political and economic elites, by the way, friendly with the U.S. government and the U.S. multinational corporations after WW II, did not mind any of this at the time, for two main reasons: they needed all the workers it could retain for their own ambitious industrialization program, in partnership with American investors and firms – the so-called “Mexican Miracle.” And secondly, the Mexican government would rather continue to depend on the irregular migration flows it had come to rely on in the past few decades, as an escape valve for whatever economic or political pressures that might arise.

A tacit, if unseemly and cynical, gentlemen's agreement between the two States ensued, whereby irregular migration flows – otherwise hypocritically highly stigmatized by both sides (with Mexico washing its hands from them altogether, and the U.S. feigning “enforcement” while employers continued to rely on “fungible” Mexican cheap labor flows) - would be tolerated, encouraged or discouraged on a purely instrumental, situational basis. *Illegalized labor migration flows became THE migration regime for North America, if disavowed by every side.*

Furthermore, each country scrupulously maintained the fiction that immigration policy was strictly a “domestic” matter, abstaining from “interference” in each other's “internal affairs” and requiring no formal, substantive bilateral commitments at the level, say of a free trade agreement. This cynical laissez-faire approach to dealing with the growing flows of irregular labor migration, and later on massive, forced population displacements, would eventually come around to bite both of them.

First, the undocumented immigrant population ballooned. By 1986, when the next immigration reform law was passed, there were over 5 million undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., mostly Mexican workers, and large numbers of Central American war refugees as well. Thanks to the appearance of a sizeable block of Latino representatives by then, and the legacy of the militant demands for immigrant protections raised during the recent militant Chicano movement in the Carter era, the new bipartisan law under the second Reagan administration gave full amnesty to about 3 million residing immigrants, in return for much-hardened and restrictive border enforcement policies and, for the first time, employer sanctions for hiring undocumented workers – neither of which worked. At the border, the cat-and-mouse Kabuki theater continued; at the workplace, employers were allowed to accept and file away fake “papers” as “proof” of legal status. The charade continued, and soon, the failure of the new neoliberal economic model of regional integration would spark the largest out-migration flow of pauperized workers in the region.

More draconian border and interior immigration enforcement laws began to be passed in the mid-1990s, as the atrophied social component of the robust neoliberal free trade accords signed by the two countries and Canada.

What had happened by 1994 was that a new and virulent nativist movement had appeared in California and elsewhere in the body politic of the United States at the end of the Cold

War, immediately championed and instrumentalized by the Republican Party. The prior trilateral elite negotiations leading to NAFTA (North American Free Trade Accord) agreed to leave migration “off the table”, while setting their aim at deregulating the regional mobility of all *other* factors of capitalist production, investment, and commerce.

The stool of North American neoliberal integration was purposely left missing a leg, the social/labor leg embodied by human migration, in the erroneous belief that the spectacular increase in trade and investment, and the *magic of the market*, would take care of it.

Not only did it not, but it made it *worse*. More draconian restrictionist laws, the beginning of border walls and a network of detention centers, and callous, inhumane border policies like “prevention through deterrence” - causing the preventable death of ten thousand migrants being forced to cross in the most dangerous places -, was the U.S. short-sighted response.

The neoliberal NAFTA regime had *increased the flows*, after displacing an estimated five million Mexican farmers; and by keeping extremely low wages constant (worse than anywhere else in the world) while trade and production catapulted, maquiladora and other workers had little choice than to become *illegalized* economic refugees in the U.S.

The unanticipated consequence of hardening of the border was to *end* the circular migration pattern and *lock-in* millions of arriving undocumented Mexican migrants on the U.S. side, which in turn fed into the growing anti-Mexican immigrant hysteria in the mass media and the duopoly, relentlessly clamoring for... more border controls!

A similar vicious cycle of U.S. military interventionism and neoliberal trade regimes generating large war/climate/economic refugee flows, which enlarged the population of undocumented migrants from the “Northern Triangle” countries of Central America, was firmly established from the late 1970s on. These flows, which rival in size the irregular migration from Mexico to the United States, have a different social makeup, consisting of entire families and unaccompanied children fleeing extreme danger and poverty, seeking asylum and turning themselves in at the border instead of hiding. These flows have also fed the anti-immigrant hysteria in recent years, despite the palpable humanitarian crisis they reflect. The numbing of the moral compass in the heated immigration debates in the United States has been an alarming new feature of the ongoing wave of xenophobia.

Hostile and punitive U.S. foreign policy elsewhere in the Americas – most prominently Haiti, Cuba, and Venezuela - has led to similar outward migration flows, with similar polarizing results in the U.S. internal political debates over immigration.

Finally, narcotrafficking and the violence it breeds in many areas of illicit drug production and transit in the Americas, has also contributed to vast population displacements and refugee migration flows, a portion of which have attempted to reach the very country that, ironically, insatiably demands and consumes these drugs. The U.S. response is to block and deny them entry, washing its hands from this desperate humanitarian crisis while doing little to address its severe public health crisis of lethal drug consumption.

Another element in the rise of virulent xenophobia in the United States was its calamitous decline of global hegemony in the post-Cold War era, and the resulting proliferation of civil and international wars involving states and non-state actors. The Al Qaeda attacks to the U.S. homeland of September 11, 2001, unjustifiably and tendentiously redefined the immigration issue as one of threatened national security, which completely misrepresented and maliciously distorted the nature of labor and refugee migration flows in the Americas. So, it is no coincidence that when Donald Trump won the presidency in 2016, his xenophobic vitriol was directed against both Mexicans and Muslims, and that he embarked on a restrictionist agenda of closing the southern border to irregular Mexican and Central American labor migrants and asylum-seekers, as well as ban further immigration from Muslim-majority countries. For him and his supporters, they are all *potential terrorists*.

The end of history, in the famous Francis Fukuyama phrase celebrating the end of the Cold War has proven to have been self-delusional, unwarrantedly triumphalist and most premature. Immigration history, for one thing, certainly *has* moved on, both for better and for worse.

Here is the better, the good news: after a decade of anti-immigrant hysteria in California, other states, as well as spilling into every presidential and congressional race, 2006 was the year that witnessed, for the first time in U.S. history, millions of immigrants collectively and defiantly marching nationwide to demand their social rights *as immigrants* (the California marches of 1994 were a harbinger). Prior to that moment, millions of immigrants had marched and fought, by themselves or alongside U.S.-born workers, demanding their collective labor and social rights *as workers* – whether it was for the 8-hour workday or for the right to unionize and collectively bargain. The same can be said for the subsequent historic mobilizations for civil and cultural rights, which had many 1st, 2nd & 3rd-generation Latino immigrants involved, but as members of distinct *ethnic communities*.

The stunning, novel irruption of that year – 2006 – was the appearance on the national stage of an entirely new *subject of history*, conscious of itself and willing to assert its own vision and demands onto the general society *as immigrants*, regardless of their class, race, ethnic background or even national origin – the birth of a *multiethnic, transnational, community of diasporic peoples demanding inclusion, equality, and dignity everywhere*.

The millions of U.S. immigrants who marched in 2006, and then again in 2010, 2013/14, gave the rest of the nation a lesson of admirable civic engagement, massively engaging in disciplined and peaceful protest, and properly presenting their righteous cause for inclusion, equality, and dignity to the rest of the nation in the most American of democratic traditions. Not a single window was shattered, not a single act of civil disobedience turned violent. The comingling of the American flags among the flags of every country of origin of the marching immigrants, far from meant to give offense, signaled the cultural pride for their many homelands and the desire to become full, loyal Americans. *Et Pluribus Unum*.

There should have been absolutely no economic, social, cultural, or political argument as to why they should be rejected by U.S.-born Americans, in their quest to belong and desire

to build a country they already had deep roots in, including raising their families, *without permission from anyone but their own consciousness*, as has indeed been the case of all prior *huddled masses yearning to breathe free*.

And yet, the history from 2006 to now has been one of increasing rejection and hostility, just like during the years leading up to the draconian 1924 law. Here is the worse part of the inexorable march of history we must contend with: 2015, just a year after the last historic immigrant marches and campaigns calling for comprehensive immigration reform occurred, the most overtly anti-immigrant national figure in the country, Donald Trump, announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United States by targeting Mexican immigrants (and later Muslim), a central feature throughout his sordid, demagogic, xenophobic campaign – and in 2016 he won!

A lot had gone into priming the country for this stunning, unexpected victory of an outright racist and xenophobe, which provided restrictionism the democratic validation it needed to become fully normalized, as we have witnessed ever since. Trump did not invent rabid anti-immigrant animus, by any means; he simply updated, channeled, and wielded it masterfully. His surprising victory further destabilized whatever bipartisanship and functionality remained in the polarized duopoly and ushered in today's period of high-pitched, rampant xenophobia – including the last four years of non-leadership and inept bungling of the issue by the timorous, centrist Biden administration. No wonder eight million Latino voters sat out the 2024 elections compared to their participation in 2020, giving Trump the margin of victory for his reelection.

No need to recount here the many inhumane, appalling and egregious actions and offenses directed against Mexican and all other non-white, non-Christian immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers by the Trump administration and the MAGA Republican Party during his first term. And suffice it to say that they have made it plain they plan to unleash many more attacks in the upcoming second term, including mass deportations, ending asylum rights, even birthright citizenship. The polls seem to confirm that is what a sizable majority (66%) of Trump voters want, even a significant percent of Blacks (25%), Latinos (20%) and Asians (28%). Clearly, we live in the worst period of xenophobia since the 1920s. That is no longer in dispute.

The crucial question now is how will Americans overcome their xenophobia *this* time around, what will it take?

The first obvious observation is that exemplary, massive, and orderly civic mobilizations by the immigrants and their allies proved to be quite *insufficient* persuasive actions for the Republican restrictionists to cease and desist their relentless attacks, nor build the sufficient backbone, appetite, and political courage among the Democrats to resolutely confront and defeat the orchestrated xenophobic campaigns of the Republicans and their donors and media promoters. The immigrant rights movement (IRM) was *too nice, too well-behaved*. The few acts of civil disobedience were *too mild and choreographed*. This has become a trend among social movements since the Civil Rights Era. But absent more *disruptive* (though peaceful) tactics on the part of the IRM, the broader society and the

duopoly in Washington will not only continue *ignoring* its demands, but feel free to *turn even more hostile, without consequences*. There is a deterrent value in disrupting business as usual, as all social movements who had engaged in such actions have learned. It signals resistance and elevates the cost of attacking or ignoring immigrant communities.

The IRM should form an autonomous **transnational front of immigrant resistance/frente transnacional de resistencia migrante** [TFIR/FTRM] willing and able to launch much more militant, resolute, and disruptive civil disobedience campaigns. Until and unless they do so, their demands will go unheard and unmet, their cause will be neglected and even betrayed by those organized forces who primarily answer to, and benefit from, the American duopoly and the donor class behind it.

A second observation is that the immigrants themselves are quite aware – and disappointed - of how very measured they have been in their protests and how much further they are willing to go – say, escalating “One Day Without Mexicans” to “One Week Without Mexicans”, then, if no response is forthcoming, two, three, and whatever more weeks it takes. A family of Oaxacan migrants once told me, at a May Day national boycott action, “Uy, profe, this is nothing compared to the weeks it took us to cross the desert to get here; we should do this for ten straight days to get the *gabachos*’ attention!” Dreamers occupying Senators’ offices and Obama’s campaign headquarters is another example of “Undocumented and Unafraid” actions, which got them DACA in 2012.

The problem for the very cautious tactics of the IRM in the ten years from 2006 to 2016 was that they came down as commands and premanufactured campaigns from on high in the Beltway of Washington, DC: from the handful of big national Latino advocacy NGOs, themselves influenced and funded by a handful of big liberal foundations, and the Obama White House, which insisted on setting the tempo and parameters of all mass campaigns and mobilizations. The Obama administration, of course, never came under fire for its disastrous futile strategy of mass deportations from the interior (the most ever) to curry favor with the utterly obstructionist Republicans. The IRM split and disbanded after the failure of that strategy became apparent at the end of 2014 and hasn’t recovered since.

The campaigns in the Obama era were solely focused on pressuring the Republicans, and then without seriously disrupting the machinery of governance, much less the ongoing border militarization and the ever-larger machinery of detention and deportation that became a veritable American Gulag *with bipartisan congressional funding*. Protest was restricted to the purely symbolic and orderly, and meant to morally persuade and politically pressure one of the two sides of the restrictionist duopoly – the flat-out obstructionist side who refused, for both xenophobic and opportunist reasons, to make any restrictionist deal that had any legalization scheme for any subgroup of undocumented immigrants, no matter how restricted or costly and lengthy the scheme was designed to be. The same would occur under President Biden. Only in various blue states has progress being achieved, thanks, in large measure, to the independence and autonomy of the IRM there.

What is called for, therefore, is for the IRM to cut its umbilical cord from the Democratic Party at the national level, its mega foundations and billionaire funders and their strings

attached that has domesticated that party, and the hegemonic role the equally coopted Washington NGOs deleteriously play in the direction of the national IRM. The IRM, to complete the collective appearance of immigrants as a mighty new subject of history, must emancipate from all duopoly-compromised, non-immigrant leaders and organizations, especially the unreliable Democratic Party operators and elected officials, and become *immigrant-led, immigrant-organized, and immigrant-based* in all its actions and demands.

A third and last observation is that for ordinary Americans to shake off their ugly xenophobia, sublimate their paranoia and rein in their hateful passions against immigrants, it will require that they experience on the subject of draconian anti-immigration measures what former governor Jerry Brown recently said they will have to experience on the subject of Trump's plans to give a blank check to the fossil fuel industry: they will have to see and experience for themselves the calamitous consequences of such folly – in the fossil fuel case, the accelerated environmental disasters fossil gases will cause; in the anti-immigrant crusade, the accelerated economic chaos – including galloping inflation, reduced care and hospitality services, more expensive food and less housing, etc. – the misguided removal of millions of essential workers will bring about. Brown called their release from deception *reductio ad absurdum*, the moment Americans will realize the absurdity and self-inflicted costs of devaluing the worth of the hard-working immigrants in their midst.

The problem, of course, is that by the time Americans free themselves from their worst angels, much damage will have been done. Perhaps that's why immigrants cannot wait but need to act and resist forcefully now, for everyone's sake, including the xenophobes.

There is no alternative: if the masters of the U.S. economy and cultural gate keepers of the great American nation wish to thrive in the 21st century, they have to compete with other prosperous regions busy integrating themselves in every aspect besides economically – culturally, geopolitically, infrastructurally, and socially. Think Europe and East Asia.

For a variety of reasons, the U.S. is no longer willing or able to remain globally hegemonic, as it was for decades after WW II. It's sole strategy to thrive in this new century is by championing a balanced, harmonious economic, geopolitical, and social integration of the North American subcontinent – which includes Canada, the U.S., Mexico, the Caribbean and Central America. Part of this region belongs to the Global North and the other part to the Global South. This is not an unsurmountable problem, but it is a huge challenge that has to be addressed head on – the alternative is regional fragmentation and increasing social, political, and economic chaos.

The challenge – of which current irregular labor and refugee migration flows are but one symptom – is how to address the profound imbalances, inequities, and asymmetries within the region. This will require not just a vibrant free trade zone, as we have achieved already, but embracing the vision of building a shared social contract that begins with allowing the much freer mobility of labor and households, then addresses issues like human and labor rights, social safety nets, and extends beyond our national borders our present notions of citizenship and political participation. For achieving those goals, our immigrant diasporas everywhere in North America – in the countries of origin, transit, and

destination, are well poised to make great contributions, if only they are seen by all societies they live in as partners and not as enemies, invaders, or competitors.

For the immediate term, the immigrants – settled and on the move, legally residing or otherwise - will have to step up to the call of history and give another, hopefully more resolute and militant, exemplary demonstration of civic resistance to the avalanche of attacks it will be subject to by the incoming Trump administration. Governments from the countries of origin and transit would be wise to express their strong solidarity with, and give their diplomatic and material support to the upcoming struggle.

Americans of all walks of life also need to step up, in two ways: in solidarity with their immigrant brothers and sisters, and reactivating their own vital social movements to confront the present neofascist threats to democracy, hard-won social victories, international peace, and the health of the planet. There is no place for xenophobia.

Everyone is called upon to take their place in the great struggle ahead for our shared, common future. Immigrants will make their contribution. Everyone else should, too.

Gonzalo Santos is Professor Emeritus of Sociology at the California State University, Bakersfield. His website is gonzalo-santos.com and may be contacted at gsantos@csub.edu.