

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

THE FUTURE OF CENTRAL AMERICA:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MIGRATION AND REMITTANCES

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Welcome Remarks and Introduction:

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PANEL 1: CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRATION TO THE UNITED STATES -- DRIVERS, TRENDS AND STATE OF THE
DEBATE:

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PROCEEDINGS

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Good morning. I'm Kevin Casas-Zamora. I'm a Senior Fellow in the foreign policy program, and the Acting Director of the Latin America Initiative at Brookings.

And it's great to have you all here today. This is the first time in quite a while, I think, that we have a discussion on Central America that is not related to the grim realities of security in the region.

Today we're going to discuss an issue that is less somber in many ways, that has very good things about it -- and bad things about it, as well -- but that is certainly no less important for the future, and also the present, of the region.

Three million Central Americans are currently living in the United States, in widely different legal situations, and all over the country. And the remittances that those millions of Central Americans send back to their countries are truly one of the pillars of the economic stability and economic dynamism in the region. Just to give you a figure, in the case of El Salvador, remittances are close to one dollar in every five of the economy. And some of the other Central American countries are not far behind.

So whatever happens to the debate on immigration in this country truly has a great impact in Central America.

Today we have put together a remarkable group of speakers, of experts -- quite a few of them from the region -- to talk about these issues. I mean, the issues of migration, in general, and the issues of remittances, the flows and impacts of remittances, in Central America, specifically.

And to cap it all, we will have the participation -- we will be honored to have the presence among us of Julissa Reynoso, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Central American and Caribbean Affairs, who will be joining us at about 11 o'clock in the morning.

This event is part of an ongoing conversation on Central America that we have endeavored to get going in Washington. It seems to me that it is slightly odd that 25 years ago this city was totally obsessed with Central America, and then Central America sort of dropped off the foreign policy radar in the U.S. So we are sort of making an effort to put it back in the radar. Because I do think that the U.S. ignores Central America at its peril.

And we are very fortunate not to be alone in this endeavor. As a matter of fact, we are co-hosting and co-sponsoring this event -- and I'm very proud to say this -- with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. Anybody who knows Central America knows very well that CABEL is a truly relevant actor in Central American development. It is truly one of the drivers of progress in the region, and it has been for many decades now.

Back in May we had a terrific event, also co-sponsored with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration. That event was on the issues of security and trade, and had the participation of Costa Rica's President, Laura Chinchilla. Now we have this event. Next we're taking the show on the road, and we're going to have, in a couple of weeks, an event on poverty and economic issues in Tegucigalpa.

And at the end of November we are planning to have yet another event here in Washington -- which I certainly hope you will attend -- on energy and infrastructure issues.

As you can see, these are all major development challenges for Central America. And to that extent, it is only right that we put together this conversation with the help of a truly central actor in Central American development such as CABEL.

I would now like to give the podium to Dr. Paolo Rodas, CABEL's Chief Economist, and our partner in crime in putting this conversation together -- a conversation which I certainly hope will continue for a long, long time for the benefit of Central America.

Thank you.

Paolo.

MR. RODAS: Mr. Kevin Casa-Zamora, ladies and gentlemen, good morning. On behalf of the Executive President of CABEL, Dr. Nick Rischbieth, I wish to welcome you to this event that we are holding with the Brookings Institution as part of our wide-ranging initiative to debate and analyze in Washington, D.C., matters of relevance to Central America.

Migration and remittances are two words that have dramatically marked the recent history of Central America. In the '80s, in the midst of internal armed conflicts that devastated three countries of the region, it was thought an exportation of labor that in those years increased substantially would be

contained as soon as peace accords were signed or elections were held to change governments. That was far from reality.

The countries returned to peace, but migration continued at the same or even greater pace. El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala and Nicaragua export labor essentially for economic reasons, and only secondarily for political ones. The American dream and the precariousness of working in Central America were the pull-and-push factors that could no longer contain the stream of migrants to the north.

In the year 2008, the peak year for remittances in Central America, this reached \$4,298 million in Guatemala, and \$3,742 million in El Salvador -- the two leading receivers of these funds. They also represented 20.2 percent of GDP in Honduras, and 17.5 percent in El Salvador, the two countries in which remittances weighed most heavily in relation to the national production.

There is no doubt that remittances have been an important economic life-vest for the region. The economic, social and even political challenges would be much greater were it not for remittances and migration.

Remittances are a counterweight to the current trade imbalance. They support local currencies, increase liquidity in the economies, lower interest rates, increase consumption in the least favored social strata, reduce poverty and social inequality, allow many children to stay in school because if the families were not receivers, they would be forced into the child labor markets -- and many other economic benefits of remittances.

In this regard, I have been asked to speak this coming Tuesday in Panama on remittances as an informal safety net -- which they, in fact, are the best safety net that our countries have, regrettably. Migration aside relieves this pressure in countries where the creation of jobs just for young people is woefully lacking. Wages would be much lower and economic informality -- which, according to various estimates is greater than 50 percent of the labor force in CA-4 countries -- would be higher if many workers had not migrated. The labor market would simply have exploded or imploded. Migration has been a valve for the release of pressure.

The combination of remittances and migration has provided great economic and social support for Central America. One is intrinsically joined to the other in developing countries. And Central America is no exception.

However, it is not all positive.

The benefits for the region may be immense, but migration is such an (inaudible minute 8:45) that has a very significant cost for our societies. Fathers and mothers are separated and leave children behind. And because they are illegal, they do not have the option of an early return. Whenever I imagine the sentimental cost a chill runs down my spine. Those of us who have at some times in our professional lives been separated from our families know how hard it is. How much harder it must be for someone who is in a country illegally and often does not know how many years will go by before they see their families again. This human cost, this damage to the family unit, this rending of the social fabric have been the costs that Central America has had to pay. It is utopian to believe that migration and remittances bring only benefits.

But the effects of the eroding of families do not end there. The *maras* have found a seed-bed in the children of these broken families. Fathers or mothers living in the United States -- or sometimes both -- without contact with their children face great challenges in keeping family cohesion. These young people, just as many others -- for certainly not only the children of migrants are affected -- have become easy prey to the feeling of collective belonging offered by these illegal groups.

Let us recall that according to the last census of the United States, 1.2 million Salvadoreans, 833,000 Guatemalans, and 523,000 Hondurans live in this country. How many families have been separated? The rate of homicide in these countries of the northern triangle has reached the highest levels of Latin America and the world.

The *maras* are not the only ones responsible. There are also drug trafficking and other forms of crime.

But Costa Rica has not suffered from this type of family break-up as the other countries have. The United States census only records 82,000 Costa Ricans. Nicaragua -- a country that certainly shares most of the economic and social sufferings of the northern triangle -- has not only managed to put in place a better policy of prevention of youth crime, but even there to suggest that because much of this

migration is not towards the United States but to the neighboring Costa Rica, with relatively continuous return to families almost does not suffer from this curse of the *maras*. And their criminality is substantially less -- even if the levels of poverty are some of the highest.

For a few years now, the three countries of the northern triangle have had the highest rates of common crime and homicides, and are the three countries whose GDP has been most affected by the international economic crisis, and are recovering more modestly. I have no doubt that in 10 or 20 years, the experts then analyzing our economies will reach the unarguable conclusion that crime has been a check on economic growth.

I want to make it clear that I am not seeking to lay the blame for all these ills on family separation and the *maras*. As we have seen in the previous event with Brookings, on matters of security, criminality is a very complex issue related to institutionality, drug trafficking, the capacity of the political system, the lack of safety nets or job opportunities, et cetera. And there are also many other economic and social weaknesses.

But what I want to say is that if anyone in the United States has been under the impression during all these years, that Central America is radiant with happiness because of the migration of its people, she or he is completely mistaken. No country likes to lose its people, and we know that migrants are usually people prepared to take risks, with enterprising spirit, that take away with them human capital in which our societies have invested in education and health. In this sense, proposals such as the border wall between the United States and Mexico, or social ostracism of migrants are absurd, to say the least -- especially for a country that to a great measure owes its historical dynamism to immigration.

The rejection of immigrants is the prevalent attitude today in industrialized countries. It is an arrogant attitude, as if they had the labor to harvest their crops, as if they had the labor to support the brick laying of buildings, as if they had the labor for industry and services that do not require skilled labor. As if migrants did not contribute to Social Security or as if they were societies with a very high birth rate, and if their population were not aging rapidly.

I draw your attention to the fact that the only industrialized country in the world that nowadays does not have this attitude, and has managed a successful incorporation with migrants into

their population, and has become an economic miracle in recent years has been Israel. In that country, citizens wait with interest the annual figure of immigrants, and people are disappointed if the figure is low -- not when it is high. While it is broadly believed that they are all Russians or Eastern Europeans with high skills, Operation Solomon has shown that thousands arrive with low skills from Africa.

As a Central American, my ideal world would be that of Costa Rica or Panama, countries that do not expel, but rather attract, population. I hope that one day the other countries of the region will reach that level.

But at this time, it is important to find short and medium-term solutions for problems such as the generalization of the TPS to the entire CA-4 countries, not just for some of them.

Promote legal and temporary employment programs, produce as much as possible the cost of transmission of remittances to Central America, among others.

I end by saying that the economic crisis a few years ago in the United States affected, for the first time in history, the flow of remittances to Central America. There was a fall in 2009 in respect to the levels received the previous year. This fall was foreseeable for the unemployment rate of Hispanics in the United States had grown from around 8 percent prior to the crisis, to 19.9 percent in March of 2010. Also, it has now fallen slightly to close to 16 percent. But the fall recorded in 2009 was an important reminder to Central America that they cannot continue relying too much on the receipt of remittances. Up to now, their behavior has been stable and growing. But the international economy has become more volatile and, moreover, migrants, nowadays run other terrible risks -- being kidnaped in Mexico by criminals who then extort the relatives in the United States and, even worse, many of them have been murdered.

Illegal immigration is not a pleasure trip for anyone. These persons risk everything to provide a better life for their families. Let us hope that one future day migration for Central Americans will be low and legal.

I must now thank you once again for accompanying us this morning. There is no doubt that the quality of those attending, selected jointly with Brookings, will enlighten us in our consideration of these two subjects of such great importance for the United States, Mexico, and Central America.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Well, thank you very much, Pablo, for framing a lot of the issues that we will be talking about today in a very eloquent and powerful way.

Now we move to our first panel on the "Central American Migration to the United States -- Drivers, Trends and State of the Debate."

We have three very accomplished and distinguished speakers with me, here. Our Professor Nestor Rodriguez, sociologist, professor of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas-Austin.

On my left I have Aaron Terrazas, a policy analyst and project manager for the Regional Migration Study Group. That's at the Migration Policy Institute.

And on the extreme left I have my colleague Audrey Singer, a Senior Fellow at the Brookings Institution, within the Metropolitan Studies Program.

In order to save time and to go straight into the discussion, I will encourage you to read the bios of our distinguished speakers, and to check for yourselves the very numerous accomplishments that they have all accrued along the years.

Without further ado, I will give the floor to Professor Nestor Rodriguez, so that he tells us what the general situation of Central American migration to the United States is like at this point.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Thank you very much for inviting me to this conversation.

What I'm going to do here is simply lay out some graphs and early findings of research on Central American migration to the United States, kind of to set a context for what we're doing here. And so we'll talk through this and see how it goes. We have 15 minutes for this, so let me see if I can keep it in time.

I think often when we talk about Central American migration we think that everybody who is coming from Honduras or Guatemala are undocumented immigrants sneaking across the border. But there's also a large amount of legal migration, immigrants who are admitted here as legal immigrants, legal permanent residents, green cards, et cetera, et cetera.

And one of the things that we see from this graph -- which comes from Government statistic, the U.S. Government -- is that, you know, after 1991 the patterns of -- the Blue is El Salvador,

red is Guatemala, green is Honduras -- the patterns, they sort of stabilize, with some fluctuation. And so that this is the context, in terms of those who are coming here with legal admission.

And so the question that was sent to me -- and I think part of what we're talking about here is because we know that there are many reports -- this is confirmed -- that there's huge return migration of Mexicans back to Mexico, I think apprehensions are down at the border, Southwest border, by about 60 percent of Mexicans, we know that apprehensions doesn't measure migration, but it's a rough indicator. More people come, you catch more. Fewer people come, you tend to catch fewer.

So if Mexican migration is down dramatically, the question is: are the Central Americans going back home, too? Because of the recession? And that was one of the questions that we're dealing with here. And what does ongoing research say about this?

And so this is, again, legal migration from Central America, from three countries. Obviously, you don't see a major drop there. What you see is a stability of migration patterns.

Now these are "Deportable Aliens Located." And these are Central Americans. Again, the blue is Salvadoreans, the red are Guatemalans, and the green are the Honduran migrants. And these are migrants that are caught at the border. And I excluded those that are caught by ICE in the interior. And I looked mainly at those caught by border patrol.

And what we see here is not a major drop. We see a drop from, like, 2005 to 2010. But I think -- because what happened between 2003 and 2007 is like an anomaly. All of a sudden it spiked up. I don't know why it spiked up, but it did. And then we see a drop. But I think that spike is an anomaly. So that if you take the spike out, what you have in terms of -- to the extent that we say this somewhat represents, roughly, unauthorized migration from Central America, we again see a normal -- sort of a stability and continuation of that migration.

At this point, from statistics, we don't see anything that indicates a major drop of Central American migration.

Now, this slide is kind of confusing, but what I try to relay here is that I think that there's a correlation between unauthorized migration -- some people call "illegal migration" -- and legal migration. And so the red line is how many Guatemalans -- this is a Guatemalan slide -- are caught at the border trying to come in. And the blue line is how many came in legally. And the yellow line is my projection --

the border patrol used to say for everyone that we catch, four get away. And I think Audrey wrote a piece later that she said three get away, or something like that. So the yellow line is three-get-away.

The point that I'm trying to make, is there a correlation between legal migration and unauthorized migration? And are they related?

We know from research that they are, because often the legal migration is the husband who came first, and then finally adjusted status and the illegal migration are the children and the wife who came later, et cetera, et cetera.

And so it seems -- the point is not to look at the volume, but the slopes of the lines. And it seems that there is a similar slope for legal and unauthorized migration. So there is a correlation. And I'll show you the measure later.

Now this is from El Salvador, and that correlation is kind of lost. It's not as clear.

And just to go fast-forward, we actually can measure correlations between legal and illegal, or unauthorized, migration. And what we find is that, for Guatemalans, there's a relationship, a correlation, of .662. If the correlation is perfect, it's 1. If there is absolutely no correlation, it's 0. So a .662 is pretty strong.

And between 1970 and 2004, between legal and unauthorized Guatemalan migration, for that country -- to understand the organization of Guatemalan migration, you've got to take those two patterns into account.

For Salvadoreans, it's much less, but it's still there -- okay? So that when you think of unauthorized migration, think of legal migration. When you think of legal migration, think -- because for some countries, those two patterns are associated.

Okay, here are the deportations. We know that after 1996, new immigration law, there was a huge rise in deportations. Mexicans take the biggest hit, about three-fourths of all deportations -- 2009 they went up as high as 393,289, Mexicans were like 75 percent of those. I talked to a retired immigration judge, who called IRA of 1996 the "Mexican Exclusion Act." I thought that was really pretty creative of this judge.

Anyway, what we're seeing here is a huge and dramatic rise -- especially after ICE gets formed, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, March 1, 2003, it becomes, what I tell my students, the

first national deportation police force. That's one of their number one jobs, to find people eligible for deportation -- right? And so you see a huge jump in the deportation of Central Americans. The Mexicans are number one in terms of how many get deported -- two-thirds to three-fourths of all deportations. Central Americans come in second. Honduras and Guatemala rotate, who gets more deportees. One year Honduras, next Guatemala, next year Honduras. So they go like that.

So it's a major issue. And we at the University of Texas at Austin, in sociology and Latin American studies are sending students to Central America and Mexico to find out what's going on with the deportees. Are they staying home, or are they coming back to the U.S.? Are they re-migrating? So, some of the things we're looking at.

And this is my favorite slide. This is what I call the "Deportation Ratio" -- that is, how many deportees per 1,000 nationals in this country who are not citizens.

And so, as you can see, nobody does well in this slide. But those who are doing better are the Salvadoreans. Their deportation ratio is 23 deportees for the year 2010, per 1,000 Salvadoreans in this country, foreign-born but not citizens. If you're not a citizen, you're eligible for deportation.

The Mexicans are at 31. The Guatemalans up all the way to 50. And then the Hondurans are 67 -- what? -- almost three times more likely to be deported than Salvadoreans, right? More than twice as likely to be deported than Mexicans.

What's going on with the Hondurans? How come they have such a high ratio of deportation? Because they are the most recent Central American group, and therefore have less established institutions of community protection and survival. The Salvadoreans -- for those of you who study Central American migration, Salvadoreans are all over place. They've got all kinds of organizations. They've got lawyers, and they promote citizenship, et cetera, et cetera. The Hondurans are not quite there yet, and so they pay a heavy price for that.

Actually, these numbers need to be adjusted, because I took the overall Central American citizenship/non-citizenship, and I need to go back and do it by country.

Quickly, here, this summer I had a student in El Salvador interviewing deportees to El Salvador. We wanted to know are they coming back, what are their families doing? What are they thinking about migration -- et cetera, et cetera?

And what she found in El Salvador -- she's been there for over a year -- is a continuing strong desire to migrate in the communities in El Salvador -- San Sebastian. Many, a majority of all deportees she interviewed -- she only spoke to about a dozen. She was also talking to families and institutions -- are planning to re-migrate. In an earlier survey we did in El Salvador, we found like 44 percent said they were planning to re-migrate.

And so every year ICE deports thousands of people who have re-migrated. So just sending people back home doesn't mean that that's -- to the extent that this is a problem for the government, the problem is over. It's just the creation of a new problem. Everything you heard before already, joining the *maras* and all of that, and then people coming back.

And we looked at our survey: who's coming back? And it tended to be migrants younger than 42, and migrants who were deported but left a spouse or children younger than 18 in this country. They're the ones that are coming back.

They talked about difficulty of finding jobs in El Salvador. A few of the deportees had lost interest in re-migrating. And the ones who did this were like those whose families were dissolved in the U.S. There was no family to come back to in the U.S. after deportation. Those who started new families in El Salvador.

And the researcher asked about, well, what about the violence in Mexico? Is that going to keep you from going back? And the answer was, "Well, there's a lot of violence here, too. And it's every day. It's not just when I migrate." So that it's not just violence in Mexico, it's violence in the home countries.

We have a researcher in El Progreso, Honduras -- pretty much the same findings. Migration is a way for economic improvement, were the comments by the migrants. Lack of work opportunity -- Honduras. The necessity to migrate to support the family. And some talking about the U.S. lifestyle is preferable, now that they've been here for several years and they got accustomed to it.

But some migrants reported -- that had been deported, they're going to stay in Honduras. One commented that life in the United States is like a prison -- you're always living underground; you have to use an assumed name, whatever, whatever.

Another woman who had been deported said, "It's better to stay in Honduras if only with basic necessities than to have to live undocumented in the U.S." Another woman said, that she was thinking about re-migrating because she was too old to find work in Honduras. She was 35 years of age - - right? -- after being deported. Companies wanted young women, not older women.

And only found one couple to return because the -- they returned from Miami back to Honduras because they couldn't find work in the U.S. anymore. So one documented case of returned migrants who went back.

Other research that we're doing in Guatemala, we're gathering pilot data. In 2009 we interviewed 30 migrant families in the Municipio of San Cristobal Totonicapan, and 30 non-migrant to see what really the advantages of migration are. And from this one Municipio, San Cristobal Totonicapan, people have been migrating -- mainly it's Mayan migration, which I think is a very special migration.

Let me just give a 10-second plug that, in all this Central American migration there is a pattern of migration of indigenous people, the Maya. But there's also indigenous people migrating from Mexico, migrating from the Andes, et cetera, et cetera. And it's a parallel migration to the mestizo migration, of people that look like me.

And that's not getting, I think, significant attention, that there's a pre-Columbian migration. The people who have been on this continent, hemisphere, for thousands of years, and it's in the 1980s, 1990s, when they have major migration northward, coming to the United States. So I think this is very anthropologically significant. But I think we're missing that in the research, and we need to get to it.

We did our surveys of migrants and non-migrant households in San Cristobal Totonicapan. Median monthly remittances, we calculated about \$180 per month -- some much higher than that, some much lower than that.

Seventeen of 30 migrant households reported that remittances were the primary source of income. That now the money that's used to keep the household alive back in Guatemala is the *remesas*, remittances. And so that makes migration and remittances very important now.

For one-third of the migrant households, remittances accounted for 90 percent or more of income. That is, for some households now -- this can be generalized, I'm sure. It's my hypothesis for

Honduras and Salvador that remittances are what keep the household operating. The people are no longer -- they used to be peasants, they are no longer farming because their workers, their family workers are here in the U.S., and they're sending back money.

Return migration is not an option for many who borrow money to migrate -- which is a lot of people. In this municipio, to pay a guide -- that's what they call them on the other side. Here we call them "smugglers" or "coyotes." From this municipio, it was \$4,500 to bring you to Houston -- okay? So you have to borrow this money. Because if you had \$4,500, you wouldn't be migrating. You wouldn't need to migrate. You had money. So they don't have this. So that when you get here, then you have to start paying this money back.

And sometimes I talk to lawyers who do the paperwork. And they sign over land, and property to the guides, or for loans, so that going back is not an option, because you owe money, and you need to pay. You're going to pay. And it's the same thing for Mexicans, when I talk to them. Some peasants who sell everything they own just to get the money to pay the smuggler.

Here -- my conclusion. My time is up.

No dramatic change in the motivation to migrate to the United States. When I go to Guatemala or El Salvador, the same people that ask me, "How can I get to the United States? Can you show me? Can you tell me? Can you wait for me at the border in Mexico ," -- whatever. And so the same people keep coming up to me. And new people. So that the motivation to migrate hasn't gone away. Why? Because the structural forces that generate migration haven't gone away, which is dire poverty.

There are scant findings of return migration due to recession. At this point we cannot say that there's any major return migration like back to Mexico because of the recession in the U.S., back to Central America. There is some, but we think it's scant. No dramatic change in motivation because there's continuing economic hardship.

Some of the researchers talked about a "culture of migration," that people grow up thinking they're going to be migrants. Some of the labor force for the cafes and restaurants in Washington, D.C., there's actually in the highlands of Guatemala, when they grow up, this is where they're going to be, one way or another.

Will violence in Mexico and U.S. enforcement bring changes? I don't know. This is going to be like a wait-and-see. But as migrants say, "Well, there's violence in this country, too." You know.

In May I was in Mexico City, at Los Pinos – with President Calderon -- and he signed into law a new migration law, to give temporary visas for people to cross Mexico. Central Americans, right? And so this is supposed to, like, offer them protection, that if you're going to cross Mexico, you don't need, really, a coyote. That this visa can take you through it. And there's special punishment for those who abuse immigrants.

But I think -- and I don't mean to be disrespectful -- but it seemed to me, from what I read in the newspapers -- and other people in Mexico say the same thing -- that the law stayed in Los Pinos. It didn't go out to the country. That many Central Americans still don't enjoy protection. And it's a very difficult crossing, to cross through Mexico.

Anyway -- those are my comments. Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Nestor.

Aaron.

MR. TERRAZAS: Thank you, Kevin. It's an honor to be here, and I wanted to thank you for the invitation.

Before I begin, I wanted to provide some quick background for those of you who are unfamiliar with the Migration Policy Institute and our work on the Regional Migration Study Group.

MPI was established about 10 years ago. It grew out of the Carnegie Endowment next door, where it was the International Migration Program for at least a decade there.

More recently, we've started working on Central American migration in the context of our Regional Migration Study Group. Now, the study group is a collection of about two dozen experts, mostly former policy-makers and academics that was launched earlier this year.

It's chaired by former Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo, former Commerce Secretary Carols Gutierrez, and former Guatemalan Vice President Eduardo Stein. And, really, it's mandated with kind of looking at regional migration issues between the northern triangle of Central America -- that's Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador -- which, as I'm sure many of you know, when we talk about

Central America, accounts for the majority, although not all, of Central American migrants. And, you know, to put it not very diplomatically, it's where the headaches are for policy-makers.

And the group is looking at two issues. First, kind of how can policy-makers promote more organic cooperation on border management and migration matters? And second, I think very closely related, is how can thoughtful policy reforms in the region's education and workforce preparation system help promote a kind of regional collaboration where migration makes sense and works for everyone, and doesn't cause these headaches?

My remarks today are kind of building on work we've done with the study group. These are my own thoughts -- and are going to focus primarily on two issues. First: some of the drivers of migration. How are the drivers changing? And second, I'm going to kind of go expand upon the context that Nestor talked about, and particularly with the Mexican migration law.

So, first, on the drivers -- I think when we talk about migration it's, you know, very easy to think about it in this simple kind of push-pull framework. You know, there's things pushing migrants out of the countries of origin, and things pulling them to the destination countries. And obviously "drivers" are those kind of push factors. You know, people often refer to a number of different factors -- poverty, kind of crime, is it the networks? You know, it's all of them, in my opinion. We can't narrow it down to any one specific driver. It's the interaction of all these things.

That said, we know there are several kind of critical indicators to look at. And in a report that we published last May, we looked at some of the demographic and human capital trends shaping migration from Mexico and Central America to the United States. And I want to quickly point to two changes and one kind of critical unknown that we highlighted in that report.

First is the changing demographics in the region -- at least in Mexico, and to a certain degree El Salvador. I think people don't recognize the degree to which these societies have undergone, over the past -- in Mexico, it's back further, but in El Salvador, the past decade -- a really demographic transition. Increasingly, you know, they're still young populations, but they're older than they were 20, 30 years ago. This is not the case in Guatemala and Honduras.

At the same time -- particularly in Mexico and, again, to a lesser degree in El Salvador -- these are increasingly educated youth. When you look at Mexican youth, kind of the median years of

education, they've, for all intents and purposes, converged with U.S. youth. And there's some kind of measurement problems there that I'd be happy to go into, but the basic point is still there that Mexican, and to a certain degree Salvadorean, youth are much better educated than people who were migrating 20 or 30 years ago.

Again, this is not necessarily the case in Guatemala and Honduras. And particularly in Guatemala there continues to be substantial lags in educational attainment, particularly among youth, and especially when we look at those, you know, marginalized populations that I'm sure many of you are familiar with -- rural groups, indigenous communities, et cetera.

The second kind of critical change that I wanted to point to is here in the U.S. And that's the change in the economy. I think, you know, we're all very aware of the changes that the United States economy has undergone over the past couple years. And there's a lot of debate whether these changes are permanent or whether they're temporary.

That said, I think, you know -- I'm not an economist, but the consensus seems to be that it's going to be a long time before we see economic growth like we did in the 1990s and the early part of this decade. And that has enormous implications for migrants. You know, the traditional, kind of, story of migration is that you know, kind of, often people come, work very hard in low status, low wage occupations, and are gradually able to improve over time.

I'm not sure that that's still going to be the case, for the next decade -- that kind of occupational and inter-generational mobility. And so I think that's kind of a critical question for more recent arrivals, overwhelmingly who are Central Americans, as Nestor mentioned, from Honduras -- kind of what opportunities are there going to be here?

A second kind of critical change here in the U.S. that I think we need to kind of have in the back of our minds is, you know, is the baby boom. And everyone for the past 20 or 30 years has been talking about how the baby-boomers entered the labor force and their pending exit is going to suddenly cause this dramatic need for migrants.

Well, over the past three years, as baby-boomers were supposed to start retiring, what we've seen is that they're not. Their retirement accounts are depleted. There's kind of continued

financial demands. And it's not clear that they're going to exit the labor market when all the projections expected that they were.

What does this mean for the number and the type of migrants that we're going to need I think is a critical question when we talk about migration.

And the third kind of driver that I think we need to keep in the back of our minds is kind of the economic context in the region. Central America has made enormous economic gains over the past two decades, since the signing of the Peace Accords in the early 1990s. It's had kind of steady growth -- unlike, kind of, you know, Mexico and South America, which have had periods of turbulence.

That said, it's still not creating kind of the quantity and type of employment to meet its population demands. How, you know -- what went wrong?

So I think that's, kind of, my sort of comments on the drivers of migration.

Next, you know, briefly I want to talk about Mexican immigration policy. It's impossible to talk about Central American migration to the United States without talking about Mexico and, you know, as I expect Audrey's going to point out, about over half of the immigrants from that northern triangle of Central America in the United States are -- are unauthorized. They lack legal status. And, overwhelmingly, they arrive in the United States by crossing the southern border.

Now, from Tapachula, Chiapas, on Mexico's southern border, to Reynosa, Tamaulipas, which is essentially the southernmost entry point into the United States, that's about 1,700 miles. And from Tapachula to Tijuana, which is essentially the northernmost entry point, that's about 2,400 miles. You know, I think there's -- Nestor made reference, and MR. Rodas also made reference to kind of the challenges, to put it mildly, that Central Americans encounter crossing Mexico.

And let's not forget the challenges they also encounter crossing other parts of Central America, depending on where they're coming from. You know, there's been numerous media reports -- many of you were mentioning, you're remember the 72 cadavers that were discovered last August in San Fernando, Tamaulipas. You know, and as Mexico's war against organized crime and drug traffic has intensified, the risks that Central Americans encounter, you know, have become increasingly visible and increasingly bloody. I'm not sure they're increasingly common, but they're increasingly visible, for sure.

And, of course, the focus on organized crime overlooks the vulnerabilities that Central American migrants have long encountered at the hands of public security forces in Mexico. There's a long documentation of abuses, for instance, by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights at the OAS.

So given this kind of background and context, I think the easy and not necessarily productive game is, you know, this kind of blame game, where Central American countries blame Mexico, and Mexico blames the United States. But that really overlooks kind of, you know, the kind of the structural forces that shape why people make decisions to move, and how they move.

So in order to kind of address some of those issues, I think it's helpful if we go back and really think about how did we get here?

And so, with your permission, I'm going to kind of go quickly into the history of how Central American migration across Mexico really emerged as this kind of problem issue.

You know, historically in Central America -- that means, before the 1980s -- kind of migration flows from Central America were concentrated on the southern border. These were local flows, transborders. Often they were agricultural workers from neighboring provinces in Guatemala to Chiapas and Oaxaca in Mexico. And, you know, the border region was considered a unified economic zone. And it really didn't matter, because people didn't go very far from where they lived.

Now, that changed in the early 1980s, with the Cold War in Central America, and humanitarian movements into Mexico -- between 1981 and 1983, about 200,000 Guatemalans sought refuge in Mexico. A much smaller number were actually officially recognized as refugees, but about 200,000 actually moved.

And, over time, even after peace was reestablished, what were originally humanitarian movements gradually became incorporated into the much larger stream of Mexicans northward. So, over the 1990s, we saw kind of emerging migration flows from Mexico's southern states -- that's Chiapas, Oaxaca, Guerrero -- as opposed to the traditional migration flows from kind of southwestern Mexico, Jalisco, Zacatecas, and Michoacan. And so Central Americans kind of joined this stream northward.

Now at the same time, let's remember that Mexico was also rapidly integrating economically with the United States and Canada, under the auspices of NAFTA. As part of that process,

the country reformed its laws kind of governing business and investor and professional visas. On the other hand, it simultaneously increased sanctions for unauthorized entry into Mexico.

You know, obviously, at the time, you can imagine kind of the difficult position that Mexico must have been in -- kind of pulled on the one hand between, I'm sure, humanitarian concerns for Central American migrants. After all, you know, Mexican policy-makers are well aware of, and have kind of been vocal advocates for migrant rights for a long time, you know, given their experience with the United States. At the same time, you know, they were kind of being pulled northward, as well.

So, in attempts to reconcile, you know, these kinds of conflicting demands, the country more or less pursued a two-pronged strategy. You know, on the one hand it created special visas for cross-border agricultural workers and visitors within that kind of unified southern border economic zone. But these visas were only valid within that region. On the other hand, as I mentioned, it increased penalties for moving beyond that region. And it also kind of tightened the visa requirements that were granted at its embassies and consulates throughout Central America.

You know, migration policy, I expect like other policy areas, is often an exercise in unintended consequences. And as we've seen along the U.S.-Mexico border and other border regions, these efforts to both limit movement through visa restrictions really ended up forcing migrants into the informal channels that kind of, you know, characterize both Mexico's southern border and its northern border.

At the time, for much of the 1980s and 1990s, Mexico's kind of immigration law was a little bit chaotic. The main kind of governing piece of legislation was the 1974 General Population Law. And as you can imagine, that law was drafted in a very different context, you know, when the main concern for the country was people departing.

Over the 1990s, as I said, NAFTA gradually kind of adapted kind of piecemeal pieces of legislation to address immigration issues. And in 1993, it created the National Institute of Migration. And this is an agency within the country's Secretaría de Gobernación which, for those of you who aren't familiar, is essentially the country's interior or home ministry, in the European sense. And INM was essentially a mirror agency to the INS.

However, over time, it became increasingly apparent that this legislative framework was outdated. Various attempts over the course of two decades culminated this year, and in May, as Nestor mentioned, Mexican policy-makers enacted a new migration law, the so-called Ley de Migración which is now, as I understand, being translated into regulation, and should become operational over the next year.

And I think, kind of, you know, two points with respect to Central America that are important. Central American countries were actively consulted during the drafting of the law, and it appears that the law has reduced, at least for the time being, some of the tensions that had been building between the countries. And you see that Central American countries are increasingly collaborating amongst each other on migration issues within Mexico. For instance, last August Guatemala and El Salvador opened a joint consular agency in Acayucan, Veracruz, to address the issues of both their nationals. I think that strikes me as a particularly kind of wise and efficient use of public resources.

I think you can also see collaboration between Mexico and Central American countries on U.S. migration issues. I understand that Mexico's kind of network of consulate-based adult education and health centers are increasingly open to Central Americans, who sometimes use those services.

That said, I think at this point it's impossible to judge the full range of impacts of Mexico's new migration law. It's still being translated into regulation. And, you know, when you read the document itself it, at times, can seem ambitious. It aims, for instance, to at the same time respect the human rights of migrants regardless of legal status, to facilitate the international movement of people, to promote labor market competition -- and protect national security at the same time. And that is -- I think U.S. policy-makers have learned this is a big kind of -- these are a lot of different things to try to balance at the same time.

You know, without a doubt, kind of, the law's vocal defense of migrants rights will kind of give policy-makers in the region kind of a renewed currency when discussing these issues with the United States. But, you know, the proof is in the pudding. I think translating the law into actionable, on-the-ground results is where the actual kind of judgment will have to lie. And that still remains to be determined.

So that's it. (Applause.)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Aaron. Thank you, in particular, for bringing the role of Mexico into the picture, which is indeed essential.

Audrey.

MS. SINGER: Thank you. I want to thank Kevin for the invitation to join him and our colleagues who are on this panel. And I'm going to provide some context around the U.S. debate on immigration, how our laws should be changed, and what that means for Central Americans who are here or who may be coming.

So, just really broadly, I will lay out some of the big issues in the debate on U.S. immigration policy. There's widespread agreement that our laws and our policies need to be changed. We are in need of a major overhaul. There's just not a lot of agreement on how to do it.

And the biggest -- there are probably more than four big areas but I'll talk about the four, really briefly.

The first, of course, is border security and internal security. Are we doing enough? Can we do better? Are we spending too much money? Can we realistically seal the border? What are the risks of not doing more, not spending more, not trying harder -- from a national security perspective? These kinds of questions are the big issues when it comes to what we should do first, and where we should spend our money.

But I will point out that, as Nestor mentioned, apprehensions are at an all-time low, which indicates that migration is also low. And there are a lot of indicators from other data sources that migration levels have really slowed during the recession. They may be back up a little bit at this point.

Apprehensions are at a low point, but deportations are at an all-time high in this country. So there's a lot of nuance that often gets lost in that part of the debate.

A second major point in the debate is how do we control people who come here to work illegally? Should we have an employment verification system and work-site enforcement? And there the issues are, you know, in order to have a larger, more comprehensive system that actually works to lower illegal immigration, we have to do away with the incentives that drive people to the U.S., the largest one being the ability to work here. So this puts more responsibility on employers, and tries to reduce the ways that people can find jobs here. And so what's being discussed there are large systems, database

systems called e-Verify. Can we scale that up? Can we make it error-free? Errors are still common. And so this is a big part of the debate, how to actually do something among employers and employees.

Third is a really big question -- how should we change our admission system? And, in particular, right now, as a result of the fragile economy coming out of the recession, maybe going into another one, how do we better organize our admissions policies to meet the economic needs of the U.S. economy?

And how can we do that while still maintaining our humanitarian stance towards immigrants, reuniting family members or fleeing persecution in their home countries? Should we reduce the number of admissions overall? Should we change the categories to reduce family admissions? More employment admissions? Should we open the door wider to more skilled immigrants? Should we close the door a little bit more on extended family members? These are some of the big questions that are out there. And it also includes our admissions policies -- debates around whether we should move towards more permanent visas and fewer temporary visas, and vice-versa. This is a big part of the debate right now.

And, of course, hovering over this debate -- bu, I think the discussion has moved from a reasonable one to a shrill one -- is what to do about the estimated 11 million people who are living in the U.S. without status. And, you know, the questions around that have to do with fairness, have to do with the rule of law, have to do with costs -- including the cost of deporting millions of people, which we cannot afford, of course. But the bigger question in some of the more realistic debates is how could we implement an earned legalization program that's fair and that allows certain people, if they meet certain criteria, to stay and work and live in this country?

So the national discussion that we're having should be about how to move forward with changes -- changes that are intelligent, that are fair, that are forward-looking. But this discussion's been really held up and stymied by the politics of the issue and the emotions of the issue. And I would say there's currently little depth to the debate that we're having right now, especially if you look at, you know, some of the Presidential debates that we're having. The depth of the discussion is just not there. It's become a very superficial one among a lot of national leaders and a lot of state leaders.

So what is happening in the realm of changes to immigration policy, in light of the fact that we have not been able to move forward in the last five years or so, when debates first started in Congress in 2005?

Two things have happened. One is that there have been a variety of actions taken at the state and local level to kind of fill this vacuum of the lack of Federal reform. And there have been some key players and places in that -- which I'll take about in a second. But the other thing that's happened is that the Obama Administration has made some administrative changes that have affected our policies, and also caused some confusion and some controversy.

So, first, to get to the state and local level issues, so this is really, in the last five years, where immigration policy-making has taken place. It's not been at the Federal level, it's been in the states. It's been in cities, in counties all across the country. And part of that impetus came from the rapid growth in immigration at the end of the 1990s, strong economy, and continuing into the first half of the 2000s.

During the Bush Administration Congress debated immigration several times. The last was in 2007. But they failed to agree on how to change the system. And partly in response to those ongoing discussions and failures to move forward, state and local leaders felt like they needed to take matters into their own hands, and started passing laws.

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures there's been a spectacular rise in state bills and resolutions since 2005. In this year alone there have been more than 1,500 proposals -- that's a record for number of state proposals.

A few hundred have been passed, but many, many have been proposed. Many of them are restrictive and punitive -- especially towards unauthorized immigrants. But many others are more supportive and reach out to immigrants in more inclusive ways. The more restrictive bills tend to focus on hiring, renting, and licensing. The more inclusive focus on language services, language access, other services. They address public safety and public health issues, and otherwise serve to integrate immigrants.

So in addition to the state reforms there have been a lot of municipal-level reforms, as well. So a fragile economic context, high unemployment, particularly in certain metropolitan areas, has really exacerbated the rhetoric around immigrants, especially the unauthorized.

So the big story out right now is about the recent law passed in Alabama. Alabama is not a traditional immigrant destination area, but what we've seen is places that saw their populations change radically over a very short period of time often reacted quickly. Not always, but it seems to be about the pace of change and the lack of history that has moved states and local leaders to make changes, as well as budgetary issues at this time when states and other municipalities have shrinking budgets.

So in terms of the Alabama law, it's now the strictest law on record. And, you know, we didn't often have these kinds of laws until recently, in the last five to seven years. This law, for example, makes it a crime for an illegal immigrant to solicit work. It makes it a crime to transport or harbor an illegal immigrant. It forbids businesses from taking tax deductions for wages paid to workers who are in the country illegally. It bars immigrants from attending public colleges -- illegal immigrants from attending public colleges. It bars drivers from stopping along the road to hire temporary workers -- often the face of undocumented immigrants in a place is day labor sites, which have cropped up all across the country in the last 10 years.

It requires law enforcement to try to determine a person's legal status during routine traffic stops. And, most controversially, it requires public elementary and secondary schools to determine and report the immigration status of students.

And the state had three suits filed against it, including one by the Obama Administration. And yesterday a Federal judge ruled that most of the law can stand, including some of the most controversial portions.

So that's big news in the immigration policy world. Not necessarily good news.

Back to the Federal programs, perhaps the one that's the most far reaching is called "Secure Communities Program." And it was originally launched by the Bush administration in 2008 as a pilot. It's supposed to be implemented across the entire United States by 2013. And this program cross-checks the names and fingerprints of everyone arrested against Federal immigration and criminal databases to identify unauthorized immigrants.

The program was intended to remove convicted criminals, but is deporting many more immigrants who have no record, or have minor crimes or infractions, such as traffic violations, on their records. So for that reason, there's been a lot of controversy around this policy. And, in fact, the governors of New York, Massachusetts and Illinois have told the Federal government they will not participate, citing these problems, and also the detrimental effect of law enforcement and other institutions, in terms of the relationships they've built up with immigrant communities.

So about a month ago, in response to this criticism and pressure, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano announced a change in the program. She announced that immigration officials would focus enforcement efforts on serious criminals, delay deportation cases for most non-criminal immigrants who don't pose a threat to public safety and national security. And she promised a case-by-case review of deportation cases -- over 300,000 -- to look for serious criminals to report.

And to prove this point, if you saw this morning's news, more than -- almost 2,000 Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials -- ICE officials -- spent the last week arresting 3,000 criminal illegal immigrants in a nationwide sweep. So this is, you know, a change -- not necessarily in the policy, but in the determination of whether a person is going to be deported or not.

So this changing context of immigration policy, the uncertainty within it, is a big factor that has an impact on all kinds of immigrants. And Central Americans, particularly Salvadoreans, Hondurans, and others who have temporary protective status, there are some very different issues that this population faces.

As several people have pointed out, there are more than 3 million Central Americans now living in the United States. These are the latest numbers we have from the Census Bureau for 2010, from the American Community Survey. They make up just under 8 percent of the 40 million foreign-born persons living in the United States, of all statuses.

The number of Central Americans has grown by about a million people a year in each of the last two decades. And what's interesting, as recently as 1980, the composition of the U.S. immigrant population was very different. It was dominated by Europeans. Five of the top 10 countries of immigration were in Europe. Mexico, of course, was at the top. Central American countries did not figure at all. But there were a fair amount of Central Americans here already in 1980, which was sort of a

turning point for some of the contexts in several of the countries there. There were about 350,000 combined, the largest were from El Salvador.

But 2000, El Salvador had over 800,000 immigrants, and ranked ninth in the list of top 10 countries of birth for all U.S. immigrants. First time for a Central American country. By 2010, both El Salvador and Guatemala were on the list of the top 10 -- which is really surprising news, when I've been looking at this for a while, watching how the pace of migration has increased. El Salvador has about 1.2 million in these numbers and is in sixth place. Guatemala, with over 800,000, in tenth. And, of course, in this year there are no European countries listed in the top 10.

Central Americans are fairly concentrated in metropolitan areas across the United States. In fact, half live in just five large metropolitan areas -- Los Angeles, New York, Miami, Washington, D.C., and Houston. Notably, they're one in five in this metropolitan area.

Quite a large number of Central Americans in the U.S. are in a precarious legal status. It's estimated that at least two out of five are in the U.S. without authorization. Those numbers come from the Pew Hispanic Center. This is about 12 percent of all undocumented in the U.S. Another 300,000 or so have temporary protective status, which also puts people in a precarious situation -- are they staying, are they leaving after investing so much?

So, just to summarize, on the surface -- and wrap up -- on the surface, Central Americans are, you know, geographically situated in places that are rather welcoming towards immigrants. So some of the effects of the more restrictive laws that we see across the country has less of an effect on them. But so many are in a precarious legal status that affects their well-being, the well-being of their children who -- most of them are here legally, who were born here as U.S. citizens.

It affects -- I don't think we've spent enough time thinking about the effects of long-term temporary protective status on immigrants. And, in fact, there's really no exit strategy for people who are in that status right now. And the effects, I would say, are pretty widespread and concentrated at the same time. So you've got effects on communities, on neighborhoods, on institutions, on workplaces, on health care systems, on schools and schooling -- very important in many, many localized areas.

And I think that's a big issue that we have not addressed. And it's something that is probably forthcoming. If we see sweeping reforms to immigration policy -- probably not anytime soon --

but if we do, and if we see an earned legalization program, many of those people will qualify under those conditions to get legal status, and many more who are currently out of status, as well.

And I think, just to end, and follow up with Aaron's ideas on the drivers of migration, those things are changing -- have changed somewhat on the ground, as he pointed out, over time. And the rise of other countries, Central American countries coming to the fore, as others stay and migrate within the region.

But the pull factors here are still strong. If it's not an economic issue as much anymore, there are still strong ties to people and institutions in this country.

So I'll end there. (Applause.)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Thank you, Audrey.

Well, thank you very much to all of our speakers.

Before I open it up to the audience, I would like to put an issue on the table that, somewhat to my surprise, was not mentioned by any of the speakers, which is the issue of human trafficking, which plays a very significant role -- particularly when it comes to the Mexico piece.

So I would ask either Nestor or Aaron to elaborate a little bit on the role that human trafficking and criminal syndicates play in all this, in all this story.

And then we're going to open up the floor to the audience. We have about 20 minutes for questions.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I can start. I could just say that it kind of depends on how you define "human trafficking." Like if it's like moving people for money, then smuggling coyotes have been part of that. But so was slavery, you know -- I tell my students, it's part of the migration.

One of the reasons, of course, is that it's so difficult to cross the border from Mexico into the United States. Never before has the border been under so much control now. So that's there.

But, yes, you point out the organized crime has gotten involved into this. And from the media we learn of the atrocities they've committed.

The migration is not a clear, smooth movement of workers coming in from Central America. It's about the trafficking of women in southern Mexico, trafficking of children. And it's about

organized crime competing for migrants -- actually taking migrants from coyotes, coyotes attacking coyotes for migrants. So that it's a very risky, dangerous situation.

And at this point, I don't -- even with the new immigration law in Mexico -- which I'm surprised that it's not discussed in this country, because it's basically supposed to be safe passage for Central Americans through Mexico to enter the United States, right?

But even that, I mean, there's a whole other layer of issues here, what's going on in Mexico overall. And I think, you know, with organized crime taking more and more control in some areas that it's going to be hard to implement, you know, some of the issues. And that in some points -- and this comes from the media and not from my research -- agents of the Mexican Immigration Institute are actually kidnaping migrants and giving them to the organized crime for money, so that they became part of human trafficking.

But maybe you can tell us more.

MR. TERRAZAS: I mean, I think, when we talk about human trafficking in particular, you know, it's just actually a very narrow subset of a whole range of intermediaries, as we call them, that facilitate the migration process. You know, there's a number of complicated steps, sometimes, dangerous between, you know, the point of origin and point of destination.

And human traffickers -- coyotes, organized crime -- are just one of a potential subset, ranging from, kind of, completely illegal and completely kind of, you know, harmful, dangerous, to more kind of benevolent recruitment agencies, or immigration attorneys, employers.

So the question is at what point on this spectrum, you know, are migrants getting their help in transiting from point A to point B? And, of course, you know, I think as Nestor referenced, you know, kind of a boon to these organized crime and traffickers has been essentially, you know, pushing migrants to informal channels. You know, making it -- you know, kind of closing down legal, safe options for them to move.

And, you know, you're not going to change human behavior, but you can influence kind of what risks they're willing to undertake.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Okay. So let's open it to the audience.

Let's take a few questions, if you don't mind. And we can make a round of three or four, and then we can go back to the audience.

And I would ask you to kindly identify yourselves when you ask your question or make your comment.

MS. NEGROPONTE: Diana Negroponte from the Latin American Initiative at Brookings.

I'd like the panel to address the issue of whether we're seeing significant numbers of South Asians and Chinese joining this migration flow from the south?

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Over there. The gentleman over there.

MR. WARREN: Rob Warren. I'm from (inaudible).

I would like to get a better evaluation of the new Mexican law, supposedly providing a safe passage visa temporarily for Central Americans through Mexico.

What has happened? Are they getting these visas? Does it provide safe passage? Is it exploited?

And what is the reaction of the United States? Is this facilitating migration to the United States?

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Ricardo, and then the lady over there. Please identify yourself.

SPEAKER: (Speaking in Spanish)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: (Speaking Spanish: Por favor indentifiquese.)

SPEAKER: (Speaking Spanish: la pregunta para los doctores; cual es el organismo internacional que usted cree que tiene las mayores posibilidades para tartar el problema migratorio, porque recientemente la OEA, en el ano 2011 ha descubierto que la emigración Internacional existe y lo ve como problema. Y la pregunta para Audry es, en el gobierno federal hay un proyecto de ley que fomenta la construcción de cárceles en distintos condados, eso resuelve el problema de impuestos e ingresos, el problemas que hay hoy en día en el manejo de las cosas publicas y paga \$91 al día por cada preso que tiene y el atractivo mayor que tienen esas cárceles hoy en día, son los inmigrantes. Como relaciona eso con secured communities y con el E-verify?)

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Could you -- I didn't ask you whether you understood Spanish or not.

MS. SINGER: I understand it a bit, but I didn't --

SPEAKER: Do you want the question in English?

MS. SINGER: -- the first part -- I didn't get, there was one part I didn't get at the beginning. So -- yes.

SPEAKER: No, the question in English is there is a Federal program that may promote community prisons --

MS. SINGER: Oh -- community prisons.

SPEAKER: Yes.

MS. SINGER: Okay.

SPEAKER: And then, one of the attractiveness is \$91 per day, per prisoner. And the bulk of the people there are illegal immigrants.

MS. SINGER: Yes. Okay. Got it.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: So how does that relate to secure communities, and so on and so forth.

And then last one, over there. The last one of this round, anyway.

MS. MALOUSH: I'm Sada Maloush. I'm a research assistant here at Brookings.

My question is for Dr. Rodriguez.

I was wondering in the communities that you interviewed, did you find that there exist any programs to help rehabilitate deportees? And would you say that such programs would be helpful to reintegrate those that are deported so that they may -- their skills that they have gained here in the U.S. could be harnessed and they can stay in those communities rather than trying to re-migrate back to the United States?

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Nestor.

MR. RODRIGUEZ: Well, I'll just start with that one.

Actually, in El Salvador there's an umbrella organization, Bienvenido a Casa, which sets up sort of a reception for deportees at the airport near San Salvador. And it works under Catholic Relief Services. And at one point the government took it over, but I think -- of El Salvador. Now they're giving it back to the NGOs.

And what they do is they welcome back immigrants. They give them an orientation of what to expect -- now that you're deported, what to expect in El Salvador. They ask them if they need, like, medical attention, transportation back home. To the extent that they can -- because they're working with, you know, limited funds, they may provide some kind of like job training or referrals.

So I guess what I'm saying, there's an inkling of something, but there's nothing large, major, substantial. And certainly nothing to keep up with the massive deportations to that country.

I know that in Guatemala there are like reception centers or something. Again, I don't know that there is a major training program for deportees to Guatemala, because these are countries that are -- how shall I say? -- are hard-pressed, right, to have these kinds of programs.

And there are things like -- I know when I was in El Salvador, they asked me, "Can you find, like, somebody to donate money so we can get some technology to remove tattoos from the deportees?" Because when they get back and they go look for work, they said the employers ask them, "Do you have any tattoos?" And they say, "No." Then they say, "Roll up your sleeves," and when they do, they see the tattoos. And the employers think they're gang members, and so they won't hire them.

I talked to deportees who said, "That's one of our biggest problems. Nobody will hire us."

At one point, the media -- the newspapers in El Salvador -- ran stories that said, "Plane loads of criminals returning back to El Salvador." And that scares the employers.

So I think you bring up a critically important question, but the answer -- as far as we know, there's nothing major, and certainly not enough to keep up with what's going.

Finally, Mexico -- Mexico has, to some extent -- and I know this is not Central America, but we found this out. Sometimes when the migrants are deported to Mexico, they're left in the border towns. Which, you know, why are they deported, right? Hundreds of thousands, right on the border towns, at midnight often. And Tijuana takes the largest share. Sometimes they can go to Mexican government offices in the border towns and get referrals for when they get back home, like Guadalajara. They can go to the DIF -- the DIF is the Mexican agency for family provision -- and there they can sometimes get, not job training or anything, but at least something to survive with the family for awhile.

But the problem is that the DIF are handling thousands of migrants, but they don't know they're migrants or have special needs. So right now we have researchers down in Guadalajara working

with DIF, trying to get surveys of the deportees so that this family agency can have a better idea how to service them.

So, yes, I think that the Latin American countries -- Mexico for sure, Central America for sure -- were caught, I think, unexpectedly with all this massive deportation that they're totally unprepared for. The same thing for the Caribbean.

I mean, even I got e-mails from the South Pacific, somebody wrote something about "deporting to paradise," or people being deported back to countries in the South Pacific, you know. But those tiny little islands, if you deport 12, it's like a major crisis because they don't know what to do with these 12 -- Fiji, or somewhere, a deportee robbed a bank. For the first time in the country, somebody robbed -- it was a deportee, right?

So many of these countries are unprepared.

MR. TERRAZAS: Okay, I'm going to address the questions in kind of, for me, easiest to hardest.

So, first, the question from Mr. Warren on better evaluation of the law. I mean, I think it's still too recent. I mean, the law is still kind of extremely notional, and it needs to be translated into regulation. We don't know kind of what the actual impacts are going to be, you know, or what the actual kind of -- many of the specifics are going to end up. And, as I said, that should happen in the next couple of months.

On the question of South Asian and Chinese kind of migration into Mexico and Central America and presumably then onward to the United States -- I haven't seen the most recent numbers. I know the Organization for American States had a meeting on this a couple of years ago. I think the numbers that I saw at that point were in the hundreds of detainees, from kind of "extra-continental" areas. They were not large.

And that said, I think it's an important point to underline how kind of proximity to the United States forces these countries to adapt their own visa and immigration policies to essentially kind of, you know, the demands of being next to the United States.

There have kind of, you know, been periodic reports, particularly of Africans' ending up in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. And often, these countries don't have means to deport these people. They

kind of detain them; they can't really do anything with them. Sometimes the International Organization for Migration gets involved and helps kind of facilitate return. Sometimes they just continue.

I think it's an interesting challenge, but necessarily a large challenge.

For the question on -- for Ricardo -- it's okay if I respond in English?

What's the international organization kind of best place to treat migrants? I mean, there's a lot of, you know, smart people thinking about this. And I don't pretend to kind of have anything particularly original to say.

But I think, from perspective, it's that, you know, there is kind of a lot of different parts of migration, if you parcel it out. You know, the World Bank does a lot of interesting work. Obviously, the International Organization for Migration kind of is involved in a lot of the mechanics of movement. And UNACR, and (inaudible).

Ultimately, I think, when it comes to migration policy, you know, this is an issue that needs to be dealt with country-to-country. I mean, there are bilateral and multilateral and in a regional sense issues. And so, in that respect, I think kind of, you know, the concept that Moises Naim next door has proposed, a "minilateralism," you know, kind of the minimum number of people in the room necessary to solve an issue is kind of the best approach.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Audrey. Your sense.

MS. SINGER: Yes, Diana's question is intriguing. I haven't seen any numbers on the trends of people making passage through Central America and Mexico. But we do know from apprehensions at the border that the number is relatively small. And, you know, those are available.

But now that you've raised that I'm going to be keeping my eye out, and talking to people about that because it's an interesting question.

And the question on prisons -- you know, prisons have become big business in this country. There's no two ways about it. And with the increase in immigrants in the Federal and state and local system, incarcerations, this has become a way for places to make money and for corporations and people to make money. So there's a lot of profit involved.

In terms of the direct correlation with secure communities, I can't really speak to that. But we did see a ramping up of detentions, and a mushrooming of need for space to detain people when a

program called "287(g)," which is a program where local law enforcement partners with Federal officials to do immigration law, enforce immigration law, particularly detaining people. We did see that many places across the country had to either ship people out, or build new facilities. And so there is definitely a link there.

And I've seen several journalistic pieces on this. I don't know any academics working on it, but I'm sure there are some. And I believe, in today's *New York Times* there's an article about this very topic -- today.

MR. CASAS-ZAMORA: Well, thank you very much. That was very, very, interesting.

(Applause.)

And I would ask you to join me in thanking our speakers. (Applause.)

Thank you very much.