Abstract

This paper will seek to answer the question: How does Mexican immigration policy affect Central American migrants while they travel through Mexico? This is an important research question I had because the focus is always on the U.S-Mexico border and often erases Central American experiences within Mexico and the role Mexico has in policing migration. In addition, more Central Americans are deported from Mexico than they are from the U.S. However, this is not something that is discussed and further erases Central American voices. The focus on the Central American caravan and migrants within the caravan changes this. Migrants are given a platform to share reasons why they are fleeing their home countries and the conditions they have had to face on their journey. In my research I have found that, through restrictive border policies and negligence of human rights, Mexican government has negatively affected Central Americans migrants’ health and livelihood. Some of the things these migrants have to go through include: sexual violence, extortion, torture, kidnapping and homicide which the Mexican government is complacent in addressing or punishing those who perpetrate these violences. My methodology will include interviews, policy and visual analysis.

Keywords: migration, human rights, discrimination, Mexican immigration policy

Introduction
Caravans have historically been a group of people traveling together for mutual protection in deserts or other hostile regions. People traveling within caravans look to each other for comfort because they share a common goal. The Central American caravan started in San Pedro Sula, Honduras on October 13, 2018 with just a couple hundred migrants headed to the United States and grew to 7,000 migrants by the end of the month. On November 13, 2018 thousands of migrants arrived at the United States-Mexico border city in Tijuana, Mexico. The caravan grew so large because many of these people are fleeing violence and economic instability with the hope of seeking a better future in the United States. The caravan is comprised of Central American men, women and children mostly from Honduras intending to seek asylum at the U.S-Mexico border. These migrants have the legal right to seek asylum after presenting themselves on U.S soil. There is a legal obligation to hear asylum cases and claims of migrants who arrive at the U.S and say they are fleeing their home countries because they fear violence. Those seeking asylum and are fleeing serious fear of persecution are considered refugees under international law. However, those seeking a better life and fleeing poverty are not considered refugees therefore do not have the same protections.

Hondurans are fleeing their country in part because of the role the U.S played in the dissolvement of the Honduran government. In 2009, the Honduran president Manuel Zelaya was couped and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton supported the election of the post-coup government. A lot of Hondurans are fleeing and seeking asylum from their corrupt, repressive, and violent government. In November of 2017 there were allegations of fraud in the presidential election in Honduras which led to protests throughout the country. Honduran forces used tear gas and fired rounds of bullets into the crowd of protesters. Trump threatened to cut millions of dollars in aid to Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador if they do not attempt to stop people
from leaving their country. The U.S also threatened to cut trade deals with Mexico if they did not stop the caravan before these migrants got to the U.S-Mexico border.

The Mexican government through its restrictive border alliance with the U.S and negligence of human rights has negatively affected Central Americans migrants’ health and livelihood within the last decade. Central American migrants risk their lives when they take this journey through Mexico. While in Mexico, brigadiers met Central Americans in the caravan and fumigated them to “avoid contagions of dengue and diseases transmitted by flies” (Pie de Pagina). This gas is made of toxic chemicals that should not come in contact with human skin. These migrants were sprayed without warning and many young children were in this crowd. Furthermore, a Honduran migrant in the caravan, 26-year-old Henry Diaz, died after being shot in the head by the Mexican police with a rubber bullet. However, the Mexican government denies that there were violent clashes at the border (Abbott, Cuffe). These are just a couple examples of the violence and xenophobia Central Americans have to face when crossing into Mexico. Some of the things these migrants have to go through include: sexual violence, extortion, torture, kidnapping and homicide. This violence comes from police, cartels, and xenophobic Mexican citizens. The Mexican government is aware of these violent and targeted attacks against Central Americans and there is not enough being done to address this. Mexican immigration policies passed by the Mexican government do not protect these migrants which leads to further violence against these migrants.

This paper will explore the effects Mexican immigration policy has on Central American migrants while they travel through Mexico. My methodology will include interviews, policy analysis and visual analysis. I plan to use images and interviews of migrants traveling within the caravan to share the testimonies of those who have first-hand experience. Often the voices of
Central American migrants are silenced or erased, so their stories do not get told. The purpose of the visual, interviews and testimonies is to humanize these migrants. They have stories to tell about what they have experienced and the conditions they are fleeing. The purpose of the policy analysis is to contextualize Mexico’s current immigration policy and compare it to their immigration policies in the last decade. I will analyze Ley de Migracion and Plan Frontera Sur and how effective or ineffective these policies are at protecting migrants and their human rights.

**U.S Involvement in Violence**

The United States has intervened in Latin American countries for centuries. The Monroe Doctrine was a U.S foreign policy from 1883 which opposed further European colonization and intervention in Latin America. However, this made it so that the U.S self-imposed themselves in a role of power whereby they could interfere in Latin America’s behalf as if Latin America could not take care of their own affairs. The U.S played a heavy role in the civil wars of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. While the U.S contributed to these wars, many of those affected fled to the U.S.

In Nicaragua the U.S backed the Somoza family’s dictatorial rule and tolerated “the pillaging of the country” for more than forty years. During the Nicaraguan Revolution (1979-1990) more military officers from Nicaragua were trained in the U.S Army’s School of Americas in Panama than any other country in Latin America (Gonzalez 132). As a result revolutionaries arose called Sandinista National Liberation Front, yet the U.S continued to back the regime. Eventually, there was a nationwide uprising in which the Sandinistas were brought to power. By the time Reagan took office he “authorized the CIA to arm, train, and finance former Somoza soldiers and henchmen into the infamous Contra army”(132). Both Reagan and the Bush administration kept the war going because they wanted to “isolate the Sandinista government
internationally”. However, while all of this was happening Nicaraguans were fleeing their country in large numbers to escape the war that the U.S had a role in.

In 1932 the U.S backed Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez (1932-1944) from El Salvador, who is responsible for the genocide of thousands of Pipil Indians known as La Matanza. When the Salvadoran Civil War began in 1979 as a result of a coffee oligarchy which left so many without land, the U.S funded and provided weapons to the Salvadoran military. El Salvador received the largest amount of American military aid in Latin America between 1981-1989. About seventy percent of the $3.7 billion that was sent to El Salvador was used for weapons and war assistance (Gonzalez, 135). Because the U.S heavily funded the Salvadoran military including the death squads, thousands of people were losing their lives and as a result people fled the country to seek refuge.

The U.S backed an oppressive regime in Guatemala, so that the Guatemalan government would serve the interests of the U.S. Guatemalan presidents have protected the interest the United Fruit Company, an American corporation, for many years. Guatemalan President Jorge Ubico (1926-1944) had granted UFCO more than a million acres of banana fields in Central America. When Juan Jose Arevalo took office he got rid of Ubico’s “vagrancy laws, recognized labor rights, established the country’s first social security and rural education programs, and offered government loans to small farmers” (136). When Arevalo was succeeded by Jacob Arbenz Guzman, Arbenz continued to redistribute the land to peasants. Arbenz even took some of the land that had belonged to UFCO and had tried to offer $1.2 million as compensation. However, the UFCO and the U.S State Department had asked for $16 million. Arbenz would not agree to this amount and as a result Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and CIA director Allen Dulles convinced Eisenhower that Arbenz should no longer be in power.
In 1954 the U.S had sponsored a coup in Guatemala in order to overthrow Jacob Arbenz Guzman and replace him with Carlos Castillo Armas. The U.S granted Guatemala foreign aid to Castillo when he took power, and Castillo would soon repay the U.S by outlawing more than 500 unions and returning more than 1.5 million acres back to the UFCO along with other big landowners. For the next four decades people were disappearing, bodies were found mutilated, and thousands were murdered. By 1976, about 20,000 people were murdered (137). Yet the U.S continued to back this oppressive regime and provide millions of dollars of aid to the government and military. Many Guatemalans, much like Salvadorans and Nicaraguans feared for their lives and fled their country to escape such a gruesome war that had taken the lives of thousands of people.

Causes of Migration

There have been many causes of migration for Central American migrants which include: gang violence and economic instability. The major gangs in Central America with a lot of gang activity are Mara Salvatrucha (MS-13) and 18th Street (Barrio 18) which were founded in Los Angeles, California. After Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996 thousands of these gang members were deported to Central America. This lead to the growth of gangs and gang activity in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras in the 2000s. Often the rhetoric around these gangs, especially from Donald Trump and his administration, is that these gangs are making their way into the U.S because of the migration of Central Americans. However, both of the gangs have an established history in Los Angeles and had little to no activity in Central America prior to IIRIRA.

Gangs have expanded in El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras and threaten the everyday lives of civilians. In El Salvador there are about 65,000 active gang members and boys as young
as 12 years old are target for recruitment. Young girls are also targeted for recruitment or to serve as sex slaves to gang members. It has been hard for local authorities and the governments of the countries to address and stop gangs. Thousands of Central Americans are left conflicted because they understand how dangerous the journey to the U.S is, however if they stay they risk losing their lives. A Honduran woman told an Atlantic journalist-- “If I stay here, I will die.” She feared being killed by gangs after her son and mother were killed within the same week (Martinez). Innocent people face extortion and threat to their life if they do not comply the demands of the gangs. Many migrants face similar situations to these. Central American parents and their children are determined to travel to the U.S to escape this violence. This is evident is the 2018 Central American caravan that is made up of many mothers, fathers and children fleeing violence.

Moreover, economic instability is another major factor for migrants leaving their respective countries. These migrants are seeking better economic opportunities in the U.S. The majority of the migrants in the caravan are Honduran, where more than 64 percent of the population live in poverty (World Bank). A migrant in the caravan named Cristian, a 34-year-old cell phone repairman from San Pedro Sula, Honduras, is fleeing because of gang related activity. Gang members demanded $83 a month, a fifth of his income, for protection payments (Agren). Cristian's income is $450 which was difficult to support himself and his four daughters with this money, so he closed his small business and decided to flee to the U.S.

**Deportation Rates: The U.S and Mexico**

Within the last decade Mexico’s immigration policies have become stricter and targeted toward Central Americans. Migration is a human right, especially because most of these people need to migrate because of necessity. In 2013, Mexico detained 86,298 foreign individuals and
the National Migration Institute deported 93 percent of the people who were detained. Of those deported in 2013, most came from Central American countries including: Honduras (32,800), Guatemala (30,000) and El Salvador (14,427). Data collected from the first four months of 2014 showed a “9 percent one-year jump” in Mexico’s deportations of migrants from these three Central American countries. Chiapas ranked first place in deportations with 43 percent of the 2013 total. Chiapas is a one of the most populated border cities near the Mexican-Guatemalan border. The next Mexican states with the most deportations were Veracruz, Oaxaca, and Tabasco (Lopez 68). The apprehensions of migrants in these Mexican states near the Mexican border with Guatemala is intentional and a direct target of Central American migrants.

As a result, Mexico has deported more Central Americans than the U.S. Mexico deported the largest number of Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans between the year 2015 to 2018 than the U.S deported between 2011 to 2014. Mexico deported an estimated 436,125 Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans while the U.S deported 293,813 between January 2015 to September 2018. The U.S deported 389,673 Guatemalans, Salvadorans, Hondurans while Mexico deported 325,560 Central Americans between 2011 to 2014 (Melendez). More Central Americans are deported now than previously before in Mexico. Between 2011 to 2014 there was not a significant difference between the number of Central American migrants deported from Mexico and the U.S. However, within the last 3 to 4 years the numbers have increased significantly while the number has maintained somewhat constant for the U.S.

**Figure 1:** Mexican States with the most Apprehensions  
**Figure 2:** Deportation of migrants
After the implementation of Ley de Migracion in 2011 number of individuals apprehended and deported increased significantly. As seen in Figure 1 most of these apprehensions occur in the Mexican states of Chiapas, Veracruz, Tabasco, Oaxaca and Tamaulipas. From the highlighted map, all these Mexican states are in the southern part of Mexico near the border with Central America. In addition, these are the routes most Central Americans take when making their journey to the U.S. Figure 2 shows the countries to which Mexico deports migrants. The top 3 biggest countries to which migrants are deported are all Central American countries with Guatemalans being where most migrants are deported to followed by Honduras and El Salvador. Just within the first 4 months of 2014 a third of migrants were deported in comparison to previous years and the number is likely to increase after Plan Frontera Sur in implemented in July of 2014. Both Ley de Migracion and Plan Frontera Sur are immigration policies that seek to address the migration of Central American migrants (further discussed in the next section.)

Furthermore, Delegates of Amnistia Internacional visited Mexico in 2008 and 2009 to interview migrants, human rights leaders, people working in refugee shelters, lawyers, academics, members of Congress, members of the National Commission of Human Rights and federal and state authorities. They visited Mexico City and the states of Chiapas, Oaxaca,
Tabasco and Veracruz, where, according to the National Institute of Migration, the authorities detain the majority of migrants. The study concluded that immigrants in Mexico will be at risk of abuse. They are marginalized, invisible, and their voices are not heard. Through their experience they do not trust anyone especially the police (Amnisti Internacional). While traveling through Mexico, these migrants may face abuses by criminal gangs, such as kidnappings, extortion and torture. Sexual violence is also a big issue, and every year an unknown number of migrants die or disappear. These abuses occur with the complicity of federal, state or local authorities because they allow for these violent acts to occur and allow perpetrators to go unpunished. Amnistia Internacional asks that the federal authorities of the Mexico develop and implement action along with the state governments to respect and protect the rights of migrants. Amnistia Internacional calls for the Mexican government to prevent and punish the abuses committed by state and non-state agents. The Mexican government is more focused on executing the law rather than punishing perpetrators.

**U.S Intervention In Mexico’s Immigration Policy**

In 2014 there was a massive surge of unaccompanied minors from Central America seeking refuge in the U.S. Under the Obama administration over a million Salvadorans, Guatemalans and Honduran migrants were detained since 2010. By the end of fiscal year 2016, the Obama administration had formally deported more than 3.4 million undocumented immigrants from the United States. This was more than the amount of immigrants deported under G. W. Bush’s term with 2.2 million deported immigrants and about 870,000 during the Clinton administration (Martinez, Slack, Martínez- Schuldt). By June 2014, there were an estimated 50,000 unaccompanied minors what made their journey toward the U.S in late 2013. In
June, Obama met with Mexican president, Pena Nieto to discuss proposals to address the unlawful migration of Central American migrants. By July, Plan Frontera Sur was proposed (Borja Armas, 23).

Mexico is doing the work for the U.S by stopping migrants from getting to the U.S. The Mexican government denied that the U.S government was the source of the funding for Plan Frontera Sur. The Mexican government wanted to maintain the illusion that they were not influenced by the U.S. The Mexican government stated many times that this immigration reform was a decision made by their government. In this way the Mexican government is being complicit and working at the demands of the U.S.

The U.S affirmed that Plan Frontera Sur was developed by Mexico and was not a result of Pena Nieto meeting with President Obama in June. However, after the Mexican government presented the plan, the Obama administration declared their public support of Pena Nieto and his efforts to address the 2014 migrant crisis. As a result of Plan Frontera Sur, Mexico militarized their National Institute of Migration. The National Institute of Migration is Mexico’s unit of government that controls and supervises migration in the country. The U.S has had a long history of intervening in Latin American affairs, and has continued to push for the best interest of the U.S.

Immigration Policies: Plan Frontera Sur and Ley de Migración

Mexican immigration policies are not welcoming to immigrants, particularly Central American immigrants. To give more historical context, the UN has accused Mexico of persistent mistreatment of “undocumented migrants, asylum seekers or refugees and even returning Mexicans or those who seek temporary work visas in the United States” between the years 2011-2017 (Mendoza). The human rights violations that are violated include: kidnappings, robberies,
sexual violence, and murders against Central Americans. According to the UN the best way to address this issue is for all levels of government such as the federal legislature, state congresses, governors and mayors to play an active role. However, the Mexican government is complacent in the violence against Central American migrants because they do not punish those who commit these violent acts. This complacency further perpetuate violence with their immigration policies.

In recent years Mexico has created more restrictive border policies at the Guatemalan-Mexican border. Mexico implemented the immigration policy, Ley de Migración in 2011. Three years later Mexico reformed their immigration policy to a much stricter and costlier plan and adopted Plan Frontera Sur in 2014 because of U.S pressure for Mexico to have a stricter border. Both policies seek address and respect migrants’ human rights that are often violated when crossing the border into Mexico. However, when these policies are implemented there is a discrepancy between what the law says and how it is applied.

*Ley de Migración (2011)*

Ley de Migración was passed on May 25, 2011 under Mexican president, Felipe de Jesús Calderón Hinojosa who served as president from December 2006 to November 2012. Earlier in 2010, President Caldersón’s administration came up with a comprehensive migration law. On January 9, 2011, the Senate proposed a new draft legislation for a new migration law (González-Murphy, Koslowski. 2)

Article one of the law states:

“*Las disposiciones de esta Ley [...] un marco de respeto, protección y salvaguarda de los derechos humanos, de contribución al desarrollo nacional, así como de preservación de la soberanía y de la seguridad nacionales.”*
The main objective of the policy is to regulate matters related to the entry and departure of Mexicans and foreigners into and from Mexico with respect of human rights. In addition, article 2 emphasizes the principles in which the nation’s migratory policy is upheld including that there would be unrestricted respect for the human rights of migrants, citizens, and foreigners of any place, nationality, gender, ethnicity, age, and migratory status, with a special attention on vulnerable groups, such as minors, women, indigenous people, adolescents, elderly people, and crime victims. However, the wording is not as explicit in its writing because it talks about respect of human rights of people of any gender with a special focus on women. Trans women are not explicitly addressed in the law as a group in need of protection, despite the disproportionate violence that trans women face.

Tens of thousands of migrant women from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and parts of Mexico who travel alone, with their children or other family members are fleeing violence in their countries. Women have reported being “raped, assaulted, extorted, and threatened by members of criminal armed groups, including gangs and drug cartels” (UNHCR, 3). These are some of the factors that women have named being the prominent reasoning for fleeing their home countries. However, migrant women have to face similar violence while traveling to the U.S. It is reported that 20,000 migrants are kidnapped every year in Mexico and earn Mexican criminals an estimated $50 million annually, however the proportion of women among the kidnapped is not known. It is estimated that six in ten migrant women are raped on their journey, and women and young girls who are abducted are more vulnerable to trafficking (Amnesty International 2014). Migrant women often face a higher risk of violence, many of these organized crimes go unpunished which leads to further violence and exploitation against women.
Transgender women flee their home countries because of the violence they face. Many trans women have reported being kicked out of their homes or shunned by their families for coming out as gay or transgender. Many trans women came out as gay before realizing their gender identity. A Salvadoran woman named Maria, was kicked out of her home at the age of 11 because she came out as gay to her parents and had to stop attending school because she could not afford it on her own. Many other trans women face the same experiences of not being able to complete their schooling because they could not afford it or because they were threatened and attacked at school.

Trans women also find it incredibly difficult to maintain work in their home countries. One Honduran woman shared that she had to quit every single job she has ever had because of the risks (UNHCR, 28). Because of this, many trans women turn to sex work to make ends meet. However, they face the risk of being attacked, raped or killed. One woman witnessed her trans friend stabbed 12 times put in a barrel and lit on fire by a group of men (UNHCR, 29). This is some of the the horrific and heinous violences that trans women are faced with. Trans women disproportionately face violence against them. Trans women face discrimination, harassment, beatings, and attacks on them or their friends, and some women are forced into sex work because they have no other options. Transgender women have repeatedly emphasized that the police provide no protections and in a few instances perpetrated further harm. While the law is said to protect the human rights of women, many women including trans women are subjected to various forms of violence including sex trafficking, rape, assault, extortion.

Plan Frontera Sur
In July of 2014 Pena Nieto, the Mexican president, introduced the program Frontera Sur, and was accompanied by the Guatemalan president Otto Perez Molina to discuss the Guatemalan-Mexican border. With this plan Mexico and Guatemala would work together to make the border more secure. This program proposes to “overcome common challenges related to migration and respect for human rights” and establish "a more modern, efficient, prosperous and secure border" (Vega, Aranda 351). The focus on Mexico’s southern border is a direct action of keeping Central Americans out of Mexico and preventing them from going to the U.S Plan Frontera Sur has led to the further represion, persecution, and death of migrants. Mexico focuses on enforcement within the country through checkpoints conducted by the National Migration Institute, the military police, the Mexican Army, and the Mexican Navy (Isacson, Meyer, Smith. 3). This resulted in the increase in vulnerability in Central Americans because migratory policy focus more on the enforcement rather than punishing human right violation committed against migrants (Quiroz Silvia). As a result more migrants are detained and deported.

This program is clear indication of the xenophobia in Mexico against Central Americans. Miroslava Cerpas, Coordinator of Centro de Investigación y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos (CIPRODEH) of Honduras says:

“In reality Mexico is the worst destination that us Central Americans can have, it is the country where we suffer the most xenophobia, the country were they kill us, kidnap us, extort [...] Hondurans leave in hopes of seeking asylum in Mexico, but when they get to Mexico they experience xenophobia. They think Hondurans are criminals.”

This xenophobia Mexicans have toward Central American migrants is similar to the xenophobia the U.S has over Mexicans. The narrative created about these people as criminals has lead to the fear and resentment of migrants. The Mexican government has been vocal in their disagreement
with Trump and the idea of building a wall because of its blatant racism, discrimination, and xenophobia. However, Mexico is not any different from the U.S in its xenophobic immigration policies. Both policies target migrants on the basis of fear and “otherness” which causes strong sentiments against these people.

The effects of recent migration policies and agreements between Mexico and the United States has “externalized the American southern border to the southern border of Mexico”. Furthermore, these migration policies created a “dynamic of interdiction” of those who have the right to claim a refugee status (Olayo-Mendez, 24). These migration policies made it much harder and almost impossible for migrants to seek a refugee status in Mexico. In addition, many migrants in the caravan were urged by Mexican police official to apply for asylum in order to get temporary status to legally stay in Mexico. However, the way asylum status works in Mexico is that it would grant migrants a 45-day stay in the country. Many in the caravan fear that they will be deported if they voluntarily went to a shelter or immigration camp. They are demanding proof that they will not be returned back to their home countries (Gutman, Hutchinson).

Since 2008, Mexico and the U.S partnered together to stop violence and create a strong border structure. However, in practice these policies have not protected those who it intends to protect. This partnership between the U.S and Mexico is not designed to protect migrants rather it is designed to protect the interests of the U.S. The U.S has provided resources to Mexico to help train troops when patrolling the Mexican borders. The Programa Frontera Sur goal was created to “protect migrants”, but its planned actions focus on improving “infrastructure for security and extractive practices” with the investment costing 400 million USD between 2014 to 2018.
This policy has shown to not take migrants’ livelihood into consideration. The main goal of Plan Frontera Sur is to apprehend and deport migrants. Through this way Mexico is working at the demands of the U.S government (Olayo-Mendez, 25). The U.S had a big influence on Mexico’s migration policies. By influencing Mexico’s immigration policy, this limits the the amount of migrants coming into the U.S. As a result, the U.S has in effect moved its southern border all the way down to Mexico’s southern border. Mexican policies are very much influenced by U.S intervention. The U.S is helping Mexico fund and maintain their strict borders to control migration patterns. Through this policy, Mexico is policing who enters the U.S. By increasing security on Mexico’s southern border, this has lead to more harm in specific marginalized communities. Now, as a result of the caravan more people are listening to Central American migrants’ testimonies about the conditions they are fleeing and the conditions they have to face when they get to Mexico.

“No Mas Frontera” : Migrants Stories

The image above was taken by Maria Ines Taracena at the border fence before walking into the DeConcini Port of Entry in Nogales, Arizona. The two trans women, Joseling and Estafany, are standing in front of a fence that reads “Honduras”, “No más frontera”, “Todas tienen derechos” and “Dignidad”. Joseling and Estafany were two of seventeen transgender
women and gay men from Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Mexico in a caravan known as Rainbow 17. These migrants were fleeing violence from their native countries for being part of the LGBTQ+ community. Their goal was to reach the U.S in hopes of seeking asylum. However, many of these migrants were faced with violence while in Mexico for being transgender and gay but also for being Central American migrants.

Furthermore, the “todas tienen derechos” message on the fence that all women should have rights, this includes trans women. Both cisgender women and trans women face abuse of all forms on their journey. LGBTQ peoples’ human rights are violated as they travel through Mexico and face more threats. The article on Arizona Public Media shares the narrative of a transgender woman who took part of the Rainbow 17, that was beaten so badly that her breast implant punctured (Taracena). While in Nogales she was facing health issues because the implants were leaking oil inside her body. These migrants are fleeing violence in their countries, yet have to face the same violence on their journey through Mexico to the U.S.

Furthermore, according to an article written for Intolerancia Diario, a circulation newspaper in the state of Puebla, Mexico there were 5 murders of trans people in Tehucán in what are hate crimes. Between the years 2010-2013 there have been increased reports of homicide of trans people near the train tracks (Castillo). Because of this, many suspect that these are Central American migrants who were killed and abandoned. Moreover, there have been reports of other trans people being murdered years prior these incidents and these crimes have gone unpunished. There was a time where the police have extorted money from someone leaving a gay bar. These forms of harassment come from the authorities, family members, neighbors, etc. Both representatives of the civil organization and Gay Pride Committee of Puebla are a part of a lot of corruption and commit many acts of extortion and abuse.
Figure 5 is an image found on The Atlantic, an online magazine platform that focuses on literary journalism. The image was taken by Oliver de Ros of hundreds of migrants in the Central American caravan. On October 19, 2018 thousands of migrants reached the border with Mexico in Tecún Umán, Guatemala. The migrants were climbing over the fence and trying to break down the gate at the border. Once they break down this barrier they need to get across a bridge to get to Mexico. The image shows just a small magnitude of how large this caravan is. There are some migrants with no belongings with them and there are others with bookbags. In the image we can see what appears to be the Salvadoran flag which symbolizes that this is the Central American caravan. In addition, in the image there are people mounting a U.S-donated military jeep. This is significant because it shows just how much influence the U.S has on
Mexico’s border security along Mexico’s southern border. People who read The Atlantic tend to have left-leaning politics, however those who see this image of migrants in the caravan climbing over a fence may see this as a violent invasion. Many people on all sides of the spectrum have their different views on the caravan and this image could dehumanize and make them look violent. However, this is how determined and the desperate measure migrants have to go through to make it to the U.S.

![Figure 6: Central American Migrants praying before traveling to Mexico](image)

The Atlantic article also features this photo of Honduran migrants praying in a shelter in Chiquimula, Guatemala, on October 16, 2018. This was taken a few days after they began their journey to the U.S. The woman in the center is overcome with emotions and it looks like she has a baby's blanket on her shoulder, this is reflective of the large number of mothers and women in the caravan. There are two other women to the left and right of her, they are all praying with their arms up and they look so immersed in prayer. Other migrants in the caravan toward the back are bowing, have their hands up, one person has a fist up. They all have a long and treacherous journey ahead of them and are seeking a higher power to protect and guide them along the way. Those in the forefront are all women and the men are in the background of the image. A lot of the mothers fled their home countries with their children in hopes of seeking a
better life and future for their children. The economic situations in a lot of Central American countries are horrible which has contributed to many people fleeing their countries.

**The Future of Mexico: Andrés Manuel López Obrador**

The 58th President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO), took office on December 1, 2018. AMLO had run for presidency in 2006 against PAN candidate Felipe Calderon and again in 2012 against PRI candidate Enrique Pena Nieto, but lost both elections. For the 2018 Mexican election, he ran under a third-party coalition led by the leftist National Regeneration Movement party (MORENA) he founded in 2014. His opponents fear that his left-leaning politics will destroy Mexico’s economy. AMLO promised to review contracts that were awarded by PEMEX, Mexico’s state oil company, to private companies during the Pena Nieto’s presidency to check them for corruption (BBC). AMLO has also promised more benefits to young students and expand social welfare for the elderly. Before getting into politics AMLO was an activist for indigenous peoples’ rights in Mexico in the late 1990s. When he was sworn into presidency on December 1, 2018 through an indigenous ceremony.

AMLO wishes to establish development between the U.S, Canada, and Central America. He proposed that Central America be introduced in the renegotiation of the Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) between Mexico, Canada and the U.S. He has been an opponent of NAFTA because it negatively affected Mexican farmworkers. Because of heavily subsidized U.S corn in Mexico, producers prices decreased and small farmers suffered as a result, which resulted in about two million people forced to leave their farms (Carlsen). He is open to working with Trump on this new agreement, because Trump is also an opponent of NAFTA. With this new plan, it would generate development so that nobody is forced to leave their home or country.
(Pradilla). ALMO promises to respect the human rights of Central American migrants as they travel through Mexico. Hopefully, he keeps to his promise and makes a plan to reform Mexico’s immigration policy which has shown to negatively affect the lives of Central American migrants.

**Conclusion**

Mexican immigration policies do not do enough to protect Central American migrants. While both Ley de Migracion and Plan Frontera Sur mention respects to human rights, both policies have failed at protecting migrants. These plans have resulted in more violence and human rights violations. Central American migrants are fleeing violence in their own countries and forced to flee because they have no other options. Plan Frontera Sur made the journey for these migrants much more difficult and dangerous because of the militarization of the border. With the election of AMLO, who has been an avid supporter of migrants rights, there may be more being done to address the issue.
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