

THE CLOSING OF BORDERS, SCHOOLS, AND MINDS

Adrienne Aron

ABSTRACT

Beginning with a general survey of the economic and geopolitical factors driving international migration, this paper discusses ways in which education has been used as a power tool, and how a society's employment of that tool, giving access to some, denying it to others, reflects its efforts to support or undermine egalitarian principles. Special attention is paid to the treatment of immigrants in the state of Arizona, and the effect of that treatment on a nine year-old schoolgirl whose parents were arrested in an immigration sweep. The psychological consequences for this little girl, the paper argues, illustrate what is at stake for the entire society at a time of globalization as we confront the biggest immigration wave ever seen in the United States.

DEMOGRAPHICS

It sometimes seems that the demographers who write of the "Push" and "Pull" factors driving human migration were inspired by Dr. Dolittle's fanciful friend, the Pushme-pullyu, half gazelle, half unicorn. Not that the push of poverty isn't real, or unemployment doesn't count, or the pull of comfortable apartments and jobs isn't for some people a magnet drawing them to greener fields--these conditions certainly exist. Still, the demographers' gentle language of push and pull can carry one to a semantic fantasy where it's easy to forget things like catastrophic neoliberal economic policies and the obscene way in which wealth is distributed in the world. Of the 140 million people living outside their countries of birth today, the vast majority would surely rather have

stayed home, and few, indeed, probably set out on foot to cross treacherous mountains and empty deserts, with no more than a jug of water and a knapsack, because they were tired of low wages or couldn't resist the allure of color TV and designer pants. For a realistic view of the contemporary push and pull of human migration, we would do better to think *endangered species*. Like the birds whose trees have disappeared, taking the insects and berries and safe nesting limbs with them, the humans who have lost their habitat and means for getting food recognize that if they can't find a place to sustain them, they die.

Foreign-born residents now comprise 12 percent of the U.S. population, double their 1980 proportion.¹ In addition to the 36 million new immigrants, another 33 million Americans have a foreign-born parent, meaning that one in five people in the United States today is either an immigrant or the child of immigrants.² Those Daughters of the American Revolution whom Eleanor Roosevelt famously addressed as "My fellow immigrants" now have more company in their fellowship than ever before in the nation's history. Coming from poor, low-wage countries of the south, these new immigrants face new perils as they try to manage in a new culture that in many cases misunderstands their motives for migrating, mistrusts their presence in the community, and misconstrues its own role in the thing called the "immigration problem." Almost never is the "immigration problem" discussed in terms of foreign-generated repression, for instance, when in fact this is the push factor for a staggering number of people entering the United States illegally

every year. More likely we might hear of “instability,” as if that were an auto-immune disease of the Third World, and not a condition engineered by international forces, responsible for enormous out-migrations from the poor, low-wage lands of the world.

For foreign-generated push factors, consider a small example like the outsourcing of jobs by American corporations. In the middle of the 2010 economic recession, Cisco Systems, Inc. reported the sunny news that it was one of the few U.S. companies creating jobs.³ What the CEO didn't mention in his weather report was that seventy-five percent of those jobs were outside the United States, in places where workers are paid only a fraction of what their counterparts in the U.S. earn.⁴ In those places, workers' efforts to organize for a living wage are put down, often violently, by military and police units—to maintain “stability,” and protect the favorable investment environment required by corporate shareholders. As well as producing serious unemployment at home (a condition that excites Wall Street and has a salutary effect on stock prices), outsourcing of jobs has often meant severe repression in the low-wage countries where the multinationals have established their plants.⁵

Another example of outside influence on migration patterns can be seen in land usage—in Mexico, Honduras, and many places in the Third World. At a time of global food shortage, small farmers eking out a living on ancestral plots are violently repressed by international interests wanting to plant the land to corn and African palm, for the lucrative oils used in biofuels. A handmade sign in a rural village in Honduras reads, “Sin tierra no hay vida”—“Without land, there's no life.”

In some cases, massive out-migrations are predicted before they occur. A 2005 CIA report forecasted “pent-up migration pressures” that would beset Haiti as a result of a “dramatic deterioration” in the country’s political, human rights, and economic situation.⁶ The CIA as a research organization has the enviable advantage of being able to both predict and assure what it perceives as likely scenarios. There was indeed an immigration crisis precipitated by a dramatic deterioration in country’s political, human rights, and economic situation—brought about, as a similar crisis had been in the early 1990s—by a U.S.-backed *coup d’etat* that removed the democratically elected president from office. The 1991 coup had returned to power the same criminals who had run the country for forty years under the dictatorships of “Papa Doc” Duvalier and his son “Baby Doc”—years of “stability” that had provided a very favorable investment climate for U.S. corporations. Rightly fearing the torture and murder of the coup regime, and renewed violence against union organizers, people fled the island by the tens of thousands after the 1991 coup, to anywhere they could hope to find safety. Only when President Aristide was returned to power did the emigration hemorrhage stop. Then, President Aristide was overthrown for a second time in 2004—this time taken at gunpoint by United States Marines.⁷ Again people had to run for their lives to escape the catastrophic human rights abuses of the coup regime.⁸ The massive emigration flow resumed.

President Aristide, in defiance of the multinational corporations and local sweatshop owners, had increased the minimum wage of Haitian workers, to bring it up to two (U.S.) dollars a day, to achieve

what he called “poverty with dignity.” During his presidency human rights violators were prosecuted and imprisoned, making it safe for people to stay home, without a need to flee the country. He also did something for education that had never been done before: more schools were built in Haiti during his few years as president than in the entire history of the country.⁹ These policies effectively put a stop to the push factors driving emigration. But they were anathema to the Duvalier supporters and their international backers—*Two dollars a day! Justice! Schools!* On behalf of corporate profits, a United States military plane flew President Aristide to Africa, and he was forced to live in exile for seven years—another involuntary migrant.

EDUCATION

When human groups encounter each other in uneven power relationships—and immigration always involves a power differential between the host people and the newcomers—education invariably figures into the mix. It can help to equalize power, as it did in ancient Athens, where there was a kind of naturalization policy in the city state. Isocrates describes in the *Panegyricus* a process of integrating foreigners into Athenian culture based on “spirit” rather than race, “to the point of calling Hellenes those partaking of our education rather than sharing our origin.” Education can also enforce unequal power relations, as it did for the British in Malaysia during the days of empire, where Chinese were given an English education but the native Malays, who outnumbered the conquering power, were barred from the schools. For similar reasons, in

the American South before the Civil War it was illegal to teach a slave to read. In more recent times, the Taliban, on taking power in Afghanistan in 1998, immediately closed a hundred girls' schools and decreed that girls must not be educated; and on the day the U.S. Marines kidnapped the president of Haiti in 2004, they also shut down the country's brand new medical school and took it over as the headquarters for the U.S. military.¹⁰ (Wisely, the commanders did not tell the troops the history of the buildings; remembering, perhaps the eighteenth century warning of Frederick the Great: "If my soldiers were to begin to think, not one would remain in the ranks").

Access to schooling has also appeared in its opposite form, as a rallying cry for revolution. In his 1953 speech denouncing the backwardness of his country under dictatorship, Fidel Castro wrote: "The little rural schoolhouses are attended by a mere half of the school age children—barefooted, half-naked and undernourished—and frequently the teacher must buy necessary school materials from his own salary. Is this the way to make a nation great?"¹¹ In Nicaragua, Carlos Fonseca, founder of the Sandinista movement, is best remembered for his revolutionary exhortation: "And teach them to read!" It was no coincidence that the U.S.-trained Contras targeted for demolition the hundreds of Nicaraguan schools built by the Sandinista revolution.

Who gets to learn, and who doesn't, has long been a sign of a people's priorities, a glimpse into the value system that informs people's attitudes toward themselves and others. When Horace Mann, venerated

as the father of American public education, began campaigning for universal schooling, his pitch to the taxpayer was that an educated public was good for business: it would increase the country's economic wealth. Once the pragmatic argument was won, he was able to reframe the issue a decade later, declaring education a "natural right for every child," an attitude that led to a policy of compulsory school attendance until the age of sixteen, and then to an insistence that everybody in high school continue on to graduation. Through most of the twentieth century, each new cohort of Americans was more likely to graduate from high school than the preceding one. Then, in the early 1970s, the trend reversed, and began a steady decline.¹² By the 1990s, all attention was on the alarming drop-out rate; it was of epic proportions. Students were quitting school at the rate of 7,000 a day.¹³

Federal legislation, innovative programs, and pedagogical experiments proliferated, in an effort to rectify the situation, and especially to improve the dreary statistics that showed minority students as the most likely to drop out. Nationally, only 62 percent of Hispanic students were graduating from high school.¹⁴ Equally disturbing was the fact that when Hispanics drop out, not even one in ten ever goes back to earn a GED, or high school equivalency certificate, as compared with African-Americans, who are twice as likely to return for a GED, and whites, who are three times more likely.¹⁵ Programs to stem the exodus from the schools began to have some effect, but in Arizona, where more than half of the student population is Hispanic, the graduation rate did not improve by 3 percent along with the national increase. The Arizona

graduation rate *dropped*, by 4 percent¹⁶—except in one particular segment of the student body, where the figures were dramatically different.

Tucson, close to the Mexican border and home to large numbers of Latino immigrants, was offering programs in Ethnic Studies and Mexican-American Studies—a fitting addition to the elementary and secondary school curricula in a region that had once been part of Mexico and retained much of its Hispanic cultural heritage. Classes in literature, history, and social justice, with an emphasis on Latino authors and perspective, attracted about 3 percent of the district’s 55,000 students—not a large population, but one large enough to track for statistical purposes.¹⁷ By 2010 the Tucson Unified School District had 44 courses in Ethnic Studies at the high school level, and more at the K-12 level. Nearly 98 percent of the students in these programs were graduating from high school! These students were also scoring significantly higher than their district peers on standardized tests, and 66 percent of them were continuing on beyond high school. The Mexican-American students among them were being admitted to college at a rate of 84 percent, while the admission rate for Mexican-Americans nationally was 24 percent. By all measures, the programs were producing stellar results: keeping students in school and inspiring them to seek higher education. These were not the results the Arizona legislature was hoping for. On December 31, 2010, *these programs were outlawed*. From that day forward the teaching of ethnic studies would be prohibited.

Two months later, on Washington's birthday, the state's Senate Appropriations Committee approved a bill to strip American-born children of their citizenship if their parents were undocumented. It also would make it illegal for the children of undocumented immigrants to attend school.¹⁸

That synchronicity between a move to criminalize the education of children and the birthday of the nation's first president, is especially jarring in light of Washington's own commitment to egalitarian education. Washington never received the fine education enjoyed by most of the founding fathers. To the end of his life he regretted that he'd had to drop out of school. In his will, he left money to an academy in Virginia, "for the purpose of educating such orphan children, or the children of such other poor & indigent persons as are unable to accomplish it with their own means."

Now, in the state of Arizona, with a model finding favor in other states, a war on immigrants had escalated to the point of punishing children and families for the poverty that had driven their migration, with no regard at all for the predatory economic policies that forced people to migrate for survival.

In the fall of 2009, Sheriff Joe Arpaio was conducting workplace sweeps in Arizona's Maricopa County, arresting anyone who looked Latino, because, as he said, "I want to make this place so unpleasant that they won't even think about doing something that could bring them

back.” With the voters and the local media behind him, he carried out his ethnic cleansing campaign in pursuit of undocumented immigrants, who were said to be criminals threatening the security of upstanding citizens. In defiance of the federal government’s efforts to restrain him, he continued the sweeps, boasting on TV that he was the sheriff, with a duty to enforce all laws.¹⁹

The sweeps had a chilling effect on the Latino community. People were frightened: afraid to leave their homes, afraid to go to work, afraid to send their children to school. At that time I was asked by a human rights organization, *Unidos en Arizona*, to conduct a psychological evaluation of a nine year-old girl in Phoenix—a child emblematic of the thousands of “children of such other poor and indigent persons” who were being labeled as dangerous criminals. In what ways were personal and community mental health being affected by repressive campaigns designed to marginalize all Latinos and expel all undocumented immigrants and their progeny from the United States?

THE CLINICAL PORTRAIT OF PATRICIA OCHOA

Trauma

Pedro Noguera describes immigrant Latino kids as differing from so many other urban youth by the respect they show to adults and the hope they feel toward the future. He sees them also as having “the drive, the work ethic, and the persistence to take advantage of opportunities;” and “the will to find a way to improve the circumstances they find themselves in.”²⁰ That’s a pretty good description of Patricia Ochoa. But Patricia is not an immigrant. She was born in the United States, to

parents who left dire economic conditions in Mexico to settle in Phoenix, Arizona, in a trailer park where all their neighbors spoke Spanish and all the kids went to the public school.

Patricia's third grade teacher described her parents as very concerned about her success and behavior, and supportive in their daughter's classroom. Patricia received straight A's on nearly all her report cards, was on the honor roll and social committee of the school, and was "student of the month" for two semesters running. She was now in fourth grade.

It was a sunny afternoon, and Patricia was home from school and playing outside with her cousin, when she heard the name of her parents' workplace mentioned on the television. She rushed inside, arriving in time to see her father on TV, in handcuffs—a scene she has not been able to forget. Because the arrest was filmed at the packing plant where both her parents worked, she was able to deduce that her mother was detained as well. Patricia was aware that workplace sweeps like this were taking place in the Phoenix area, but until she witnessed this shocking scene of her father being taken away in handcuffs, she'd never thought of her own family as vulnerable. Signs of trauma were clearly present when I examined her two months later.

Trauma has been described as occurring in children "when one loses the sense of having a safe place to retreat within or outside oneself to deal with frightening emotions or experiences."²¹ Although Patricia was a particularly high-functioning child who would be classified as

“resilient,” all experts on child trauma agree that resilience has its limits, and all children are changed by trauma.

Often, the changes brought about by trauma are not readily apparent. When the trauma occurs before age 11, as in Patricia’s case, the child is at greater risk of losing trust than if she is older. When it involves loss, the child’s sense of vulnerability rises, and this can lead to chronic sadness and depression.²² Researchers during World War II found that separation from parents was more traumatic for children than exposure to bombs and air raids, and the same effect was observed in Nicaragua during the Contra War of the 1980s, in a study undertaken by the Nicaraguan Psychological Association.²³ As a child of nine with a traumatic experience involving loss, while forcibly separated from both parents and believing her parents to be in danger, Patricia was at high risk, like thousands of others orphaned by the U.S. immigration policies and their enforcers.

Several assessment tools were used in the examination of Patricia, to obtain a picture of her psychological functioning.²⁴ On a trauma screening, she scored on enough items to warrant a diagnosis of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. She had intrusive, uncontrollable recollections of the trauma during the day and while asleep. Her dreams were of people being snatched: “Instead of taking my mom, they take me, my dad, and my whole family.” In the first days after her parents’ arrests, every time the phone rang she grew frightened, thinking it was the sheriff. She and her playmates had taken to staying very close to home because, as she put it, “We’re all scared the sheriff will come and

sweep the adults and leave the children alone.” Some of her hyperarousal symptoms had attenuated with time: she was no longer responding with fear to the ring of the phone; and she wasn’t lying awake all night as she had the first night of the separation. Insomnia and bad dreams were still present, but not as disturbing as they had been.

Numbing responses that began when her parents were arrested, persisted. She tried to avoid passing by the family house, as it reminded her of the TV and what she’d seen. Videos of her father’s arrest were available, but she did not want to see them. She had little appetite, because sitting down to dinner reminded her of the absence of her parents. Likewise, she didn’t like going to the movies anymore, because that was an activity she associated with her mother and father.

“Numbing” symptoms were serving Patricia as protective armor against being flooded by negative emotions. If these were to increase in number or duration, the result could be an apathy where we now were seeing curiosity, and a withdrawal where we now could see an enthusiasm for learning. My mind...*is very big;*” she wrote on the Incomplete Sentences Blank; “I want to know...*how glass is made.*” On the day the sheriff’s deputies arrested her father, he was going to take her to a bank and a restaurant so she could touch Braille lettering, to satisfy her curiosity about what the letters feel like on the fingertips.

Patricia was showing no evidence of developmental regression such as is often seen in young children with PTSD, though delayed responses are not uncommon with this disorder, and setbacks could

occur at a later time to confirm or mimic a developmental regression.

For now, her mind felt big, and her curiosity was intact.

Children are changed by trauma in ways that are both obvious and subtle, often expressed as a reorganizing of thoughts or feelings in an effort to master the traumatic event. For some time Patricia had wanted to be a doctor or a teacher when she grew up. She was now saying she wanted to be a lawyer “because of what happened to my mom and dad—because those people help other people who are in jail.” Asked about her feelings toward the sheriff’s department, her reply was, “I used to not like it, but now I hate it.” Asked to draw a picture of Sheriff Joe Arpaio, she made a sketch of an ogre you wouldn’t want to meet up with in a dark alley.

Processing Aggression

There was evidence that Patricia’s moral development was being affected by the trauma as she struggled to affirm the principle that all human beings should care for each other. In catechism, on the week of our interview, she learned about the Christian miracle of the loaves, and what impressed her most in the story was the fact that the bread was shared by everyone. She was struggling to believe in cooperation and trust. Her efforts were vividly portrayed in her invention for the picture on the Children’s Apperception Test that displays a tiger, fangs showing and claws bared, leaping for an unprotected monkey. Initially, Patricia saw the aggressor as arbitrary in his cruelty. Then she allowed for the possibility that the victim did something to provoke the anger of the aggressor. Then she contemplated the aggression as natural—a hunt for

food. Then she introduced fatigue to allow for a “time out” in which the tiger could apologize to the monkey, and the monkey, if he did something wrong, could apologize too, and a truce would occur, as a benefit to the entire community. Patricia deftly moved the story from good guy/bad guy simplicity with an abuse of power, to a story of ending violence so that everybody can be happy.

Another Mexican-American child, slightly younger, shown the same card the following day in his middle class neighborhood that had experienced no raids by the sheriff’s department, considered only the strategies of the animals, not their motives. He saw the tiger as doing everything possible to catch the monkey, and the monkey everything possible to escape. Finally, the monkey got to a high branch where the tiger couldn’t reach him. “The monkey was all safe, and that’s the end.” It is interesting to note that no such confidence can be seen in Patricia’s conclusion, because her story ends with a truce, and unlike a definitive peace treaty, a truce can be broken. If that occurs, the entire community will again be in danger; the animals may be happy (and perhaps optimistic), but they won’t be “all safe.” And safety had become a matter of much consequence to Patricia, as it is for all traumatized children. It had become a factor in her evaluation of everything, from her father’s driving to her situation at school. Only a child much preoccupied by security, as she is, would write on the Incomplete Sentences Blank: “In school, my teachers...*are nice and safe.*” Her concern for safety, it should be noted, stems from her personal, lived, experience of insecurity. This distinguishes it from the insecurity present in the non-immigrant

community, where the fear of criminal invasions through unprotected borders has no empirical basis.

Before the trauma Patricia was not beset by the doubts that were now coloring her thoughts about the human condition. Her third grade teacher had seen her as a person with a talent for conflict resolution: “She helped keep our class community strong,” he said, “and she helped to resolve issues and disputes between students.” Conflict resolution, though, is predicated on trust, and Patricia was no longer sure of who or what could be trusted—not when there were predators about.

Patricia’s optimism was on the line. Her parents might be deported. If that happened, she would be reunited with them, but in that scenario she would lose much of the scaffolding that had supported her sunny outlook until now—her best friend Malena, who had been by her side since kindergarten; her extended family, who were now looking after her and who, she had assured her parents in letters, were taking good care of her while they were in jail; her classmates, who made up a cohort whose stability and consistency contributed much to Patricia’s confidence and self-esteem; her school, where she had earned the reputation of outstanding, model student; and the self-confidence of her parents, whose own roles as wage-earners and protectors would be compromised if the family were to move to Mexico.

Asked to draw two trees, one planted in Mexico and one in Arizona, Patricia was able to color bright greenery and growth in both trees, indicating that she was not anticipating disaster in a move to Mexico. But the subtle, unconscious indicators of “reaching out to take

in the world” represented by the trees’ branches, were strong and energetic in the tree growing in Phoenix, and weak, simplified, and impoverished in the Mexican tree. The difference here most probably represented Patricia’s internalization of what she had been told about her parents’ migration history: that in the United States there are opportunities not available in Mexico. Not surprisingly, the house in Patricia’s House-Tree-Person drawing clings to the bottom edge of the paper, a feature associated with insecurity.

Patricia was trying to master the anxieties she felt over the loss of her parents. She tried to comfort her mother and father by sending them pictures of herself, and tried not to despair when she learned that a prison guard saw her picture in her father’s cell, and took it away. On the Three Wishes Test, where a child of her age and intelligence generally displays an exuberant imagination, her first wish was simply “to have my parents.” Her sentence completions and projective tests reflected a struggle to maintain an optimistic view of life and control the anger she felt toward the people responsible for her parents’ detention. After completing the requisite figures of the House-Tree-Person drawing, and noting when asked that it was daytime in the picture, she asked, “Can I put in the sun?” The shining sun in children’s drawings is considered a diagnostic sign of emotional well-being and contentment.

On an English language Children’s Sentence Completion Test, Patricia responded appropriately to items that pulled for family, such as “My daddy is...*nice and cool*,” “My family is the...*niciest thing ever*.” But she also introduced family issues when they were not solicited: “The

thing I want to do most of all is...*be with my mom and dad.*” “What I want to happen the most is...*to see my parents.*” “What I want more than anything is...*my parents.*” These references to the separation from her parents were mirrored in the Spanish Incomplete Sentences Blank, where she introduced the following sentiments, rendered here in translation: “At home...*I like to watch television with my mom and dad.*” “The best...*is to be with my mother and father, together.*” “I suffer...*because they took my mother and my father.*” “I need...*my mother and father.*” Overall, whether operating in English or in Spanish, Patricia referred to her parents three times more often than would be expected from the prompts alone. There is no question of what problem was nourishing the root of her distress.

Conflicted over how she should be feeling about authority, Patricia wrote on the Sentences Blank, “People...*are sometimes good and [sometimes] bad.*” “I hate...*tigers.*” Patricia was being forced to confront the question of whether her own parents were bad people for not having “papers,” as the sheriff claimed—whether the monkey might be at fault as well as the tiger. Would this, though, justify her parents being taken from her? Would it justify a forced move to Mexico, a place she’d never known?

Many children in Arizona, and increasingly in other states as well, are having to grapple with these strange dilemmas. An elementary school principal in Phoenix tells of the parent of students at his school, who was stopped for a defective turn signal and turned over to ICE for deportation. “The mother informed me that her daughters were

devastated upon hearing that their father was incarcerated,” he stated. “She and her immediate family spent an extensive amount of time explaining to the girls that their father was not a bad man or a criminal.”

In Patricia’s case, neither mother nor father was present to do the explaining, and even if she was forced to move to Mexico as those other girls were, that could not solve for Patricia the dilemma of guilt and responsibility. The problem could even be exacerbated—by blame being cast on the parents for adjustment difficulties encountered in Mexico after a move. Even school placement has generated adjustment difficulties for deportees, according to the Phoenix school principal, who has stayed in touch with some of the 100 students his school lost to deportation in 2008. Though the children are bilingual, they lack the level of Spanish proficiency for age-appropriate placement in Mexico’s public schools, and are placed in lower grades, with younger students. As when anger turns inward and results in self-destructive acts, anger over an involuntary move, an unfamiliar, possibly hostile, environment, and a frustrating school experience can result in acting-out behaviors at home, compromising family unity at precisely the time when the children most need family support.

My psychological evaluation of Patricia Ochoa closed by summarizing a problem of mental health that was entirely preventable, together with a recommendation for therapy that should never have been needed. In the United States this child of Mexican immigrants had achieved, through her parents’ loving attentions and an educational system committed to equal opportunities for all, a life that was on a

trajectory for exemplary success—until the law introduced a tiger into her life and it chewed up her trust in the environment.

BORDERS, SCHOOLS, AND MINDS

A proposal such as was introduced in Arizona’s legislature, to prohibit students like Patricia from attending school, affects not only the personal development of the targeted children and the well-being of the rest of the excluded community; it affects the larger community as well. Dr. Rodolfo Acuña, whose book *Occupied America* has been banned in Arizona, sees in the Arizona laws a cynical agenda on the part of the Whites to keep Mexicans stooping in the fields and blowing leaves in the driveway, never owning a farm or living in a house with a yard.²⁵ A precise equivalent to the nineteenth century British ban on the education of the hunting and gathering Malays, and the Confederacy’s prohibition against teaching slaves to read, the war on immigrants speaks to a depredation of American society, not simply a crisis in American education.

As George Washington knew, a society has an obligation to provide an education to “the children of such other poor & indigent persons as are unable to accomplish it with their own means,” and as we know from the gains and losses of the twentieth century, a failure in this realm is a moral failure. The economic depredations are sometimes hidden, as in the profits reaped by the private prisons that have sprung up all over to incarcerate undocumented immigrants;²⁶ and sometimes they are made public, as praiseworthy achievements, like the record profits earned by the multinational corporations that are decimating local

economies and forcing people to migrate for mere subsistence.²⁷ The story of Patricia Ochoa points to psychological depredations that have ramifications beyond the personal biography of the individual victims. The mental health of the entire community is affected by propaganda campaigns that demonize immigrants and misrepresent their motives for crossing national borders. In Arizona—and the trend is spreading—people who are without residency documents are painted as criminals, sneaking into the country the way a burglar sneaks into your home to take what is rightfully yours, or an invader forces his way into your place to subjugate and harm you. Given the analogies, it becomes possible to understand what a woman told me when I mentioned that I'd be evaluating a little girl whose parents were arrested in a sweep. "Good," she said, "I hope they take that child away from those criminals and give her to a decent family."

The pernicious pairing of *Immigrant* with *Criminal* and *Invader* has led to artificially generated feelings of vulnerability and fear, so powerful as to make people willing, even eager, to shelter under the protection of police and military, as if life in a police state were a life worth aspiring to. Anthropologist Leo Chavez points out the progression that becomes possible when propaganda like this prevails: "Once the border is characterized as a war zone that is under siege, 'invaded,' 'defended,' and 'lost,' it is easy to slip from war as metaphor to war as practice."²⁸ And as psychologist Martín-Baró cautioned, "Mentally, to develop in the context of war leads one to accept as a given the legitimacy of violence, if not the militarization of one's own mind."²⁹

Patricia Ochoa, struggling with the question of whether the tiger has a right to attack the monkey, has recognized, with the “big mind” given to her by nature and enlarged by her parents and her teachers, a dilemma that all of us must face but not all of us have articulated as creatively as she has: Is it possible, given separate and opposing needs, for creatures to find a way to live together without destruction?

There can be no answer to this question unless we allow for destruction to include not only the violence of war that inevitably results from militarization, but also the violence of predatory profit-seeking that destroys habitat and livelihood, and forces people to emigrate for survival. Violent regime changes have to be counted in the destruction, as well as the fracturing of families when mothers or fathers are forced to migrate to seek work, or to suffer deportation if they’ve crossed a border without inspection.³⁰ Destruction has to include the dismantling of a public education system that was the pride of a democratic country, and the trampling of civil liberties and human rights that were guaranteed by a constitution and international law. We have to include the destructive distortions of the mass media that misrepresent reality in order to promote the interests of the privileged few, and that give voice to those acting to normalize hatred. We have to include the destruction of rational thought when it is corrupted by irrational, manufactured fears. The destruction surrounding issues of immigration is enormous in scope, and lethal in its effects.

All of the dehumanizing structures that thrive on exploitation instead of mutual respect, and that reward avarice instead of justice,

have got to be reckoned with if we want to solve the immigration problem. To repair the damage that has been done to our psyches, our schools, our safety, and our social fabric, the entire System has got to be re-examined, from foreign policy to the meaning of citizenship. The System has made a monkey of us. Like Patricia, we have big minds. We need to use them to avoid being eaten by the tiger.

Notes

1 The trend exists globally. In Europe, e.g., Finland's foreign population increased 6-fold between 1987 and 2001; in Greece, one person out of 11 holds a foreign passport. Figures from Pitkanen, P., Kalekin-Fishman, D., and Verma, G. *Education and Immigration* (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2002).

2 Press Release, U.S. Census Bureau, October 19, 2010.

3 Chambers, J., "U.S. Jobs, Innovation, Growth and Investment," blogs.cisco.com, November 10, 2010.

4 According to CIA figures, in the mid-1990s, Mexican migrants earned nine times as much in the United States as in their last job in Mexico, and remittances to Mexico from immigrants working in the U.S. totaled some \$7 billion a year. (National Foreign Intelligence Board, *Growing Global Migration and its Implications for the United States*, 2001) p. 14, p. 21.

5 For a succinct discussion of the corporate-repression connection, see Farmer, P., *The Uses of Haiti* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage, 1994) pp. 20-21. For a larger discussion, covering the nuts and bolts that hold the corporate-repression machinery together, see Perkins, J., *Confessions of an Economic Hit Man* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2004).

6 National Foreign Intelligence Board, *Growing Global Migration and its Implications for the United States*, 2001, pp. 29-30.

7 Robinson, R. *An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, from Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President* (NY: Basic Civitas, Perseus, 2007).

8 In the several months following the coup, 8,000 persons were murdered and approximately 35,000 women were raped, in the capital city alone. See Kolbe, A. and Hutson, R., "Human Rights Abuse and Other Criminal Violations in Port-au-Prince Haiti: A Random Survey of Households," *Lancet*, September, 2006.

9 President Aristide supplied figures in his missive "On My Return to Haiti," Guardian.co.uk, February 4, 2011: "More schools were built in the 10 years

between 1994, when democracy was restored, and 2004—when Haiti’s democracy was again violated—than between 1804 to 1994: one hundred and ninety-five new primary schools and 104 new public high schools constructed and/or refurbished.”

10 The school was built in partnership with the Cuban government, so that Haitian students would not have to leave the country to be trained in medicine. Under President Aristide, 20 percent of the national budget was allocated to education. See Flynn, L. and Roth, R., “We Will Not Forget: The Achievements of Lavalas in Haiti,” Haiti Action Committee, 2005. .

11 Castro, F., *History Will Absolve Me* (New York: L. Stuart, 1961). The Cuban revolution’s first major undertaking on coming to power in 1959 was a national literacy campaign, so successful that UNESCO called it a near miracle of transformation. Today, according to the U.S. State Department, 99.8 percent of the entire country is literate (Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, March 25, 2010).

12 (See Goldin, C. and Katz, L., *The Race Between Education and Technology* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

13 Alliance for Excellent Education Fact Sheet, 2009.

14 See Laird, J., Kienzl, G., DeBell, M. and Chapman, C., "Dropout Rates in the United States: 2005" (U.S. Department of Education, NCES 2007-059).

15 Fry, R., “Hispanics, High School Dropouts and the GED” (Pew Hispanic Center, 5/13/2010).

16 Smith, D., in TucsonSentinel.com, 11/30/2010.

17 The following statistics were compiled by the program, under the direction of its founder, Sean Arce. See www.saveethnicstudies.org.

18 Rau, A.B., “Arizona Immigration Bills Aim For Bigger Crackdown,” *The Arizona Republic*, 2/23/2011. The bill, Senate Bill 1611, required proof of legal status to enroll a student in any public or private K-12 school, or attend an Arizona community college or university. It required schools to report violations to law enforcement and the Arizona Department of Education. The bill did not pass the full Senate. The week it was brought up for vote, however, a Kansas legislator recommended solving the immigration problem in his state by shooting at illegal immigrants from helicopters, the method used for hunting wild pigs.

19 Fox News, 10/9/2009.

20 Noguera, P., *The Trouble With Black Boys* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2008) p. 49.

21 Van der Kolk, B. A., *Psychological Trauma* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press, 1987).

22 See Garbarino, J., Dubrow, N., Kostelny, K., & Pardo, C., *Children in Danger* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

23 See: Pynoos, R. and Nader, K., "Psychological First Aid and Treatment Approach to Children Exposed to Community Violence" (*J. Traumatic Stress Studies*, I (4) 1988; Ressler, E., Boothby, N., & Steinbock, D. *Unaccompanied Children* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Sequeira, L. and Aburto, M., "Children's Responses to the War in Nicaragua," paper presented at American Psychological Association annual conference, Toronto, 1984.

24 House-Tree-Person Test; Kinetic Family Drawing; requested drawings of Sheriff Arpaio and of trees in Arizona and Mexico; Children's Apperception Test; children's Incomplete Sentences Blank (one in English, one in Spanish); the Three Wishes Test; and a Screening Protocol for Major Trauma.

25 Interview, KPFA-FM 2/23/2010.

26 The state's prison population has increased by 500% since 1980 (from 3,857 inmates to more than 40,000 in 2010). "Illegal Immigration: Perception and Realities," Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University, May, 2010.

27 Migration, it should be remembered, is usually a course of last resort, undertaken only when other options are exhausted. In Haiti, it is not uncommon for the desperate poor to sell their own blood in order to buy food, a poignant example of *The Open Veins of Latin America*, the title of Eduardo Galeano's famous book—a copy of which was presented to President Obama by Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez in 2009.

28 "Mexicans of Mass Destruction," in Martínez, S. (Ed.), *International Migration and Human Rights: The Global Repercussions of U.S. Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

29 "War and the Psychosocial Trauma of Salvadoran Children," in Aron, A. and Corne, S. (Eds.), *Writings for a Liberation Psychology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1994).

30 Senator Edward Kennedy called the aftermath of a DHS raid in Massachusetts one of the most heartbreaking scenes he ever witnessed in 45 years of public life: "... the pain and suffering of the families and community ripped apart by the actions of the Department of Homeland Security...Babies were screaming for their mothers. Wives were desperately searching for information about their husbands. One father tearfully described the agony and sleeplessness of his young children who couldn't understand why their mother had disappeared." Quoted in Gabany-Guerrero, T., "An Anatomy of Mexican Repatriation," in Martínez, S., *International Migration and Human Rights: The Global Repercussions of U.S. Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, p. 153).