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Marie Price & Derek Breese

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Unintended Return: U.S. Deportations and the Fractious Politics of Mobility for Latinos

Marie Price and Derek Breese

Department of Geography, The George Washington University

A record-breaking 4.2 million people have been removed from the United States since 2000, with migrants from Latin America accounting for over 93 percent of all removals. The U.S. policy shift toward forced removals (commonly referred to as deportations) underscores many mobility politics and paradoxes that Latinos experience. Their determination to be mobile and leave their countries of origin often results in encountering various legal challenges in the United States that might limit their mobility within the United States and, sometimes, result in their involuntary mobility through forced return. This article is grounded in the politics of mobility literature interested in the frictions created within constellations of mobility that create unintended return. Drawing from administrative data produced by the Department of Homeland Security, Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) data, and the U.S. Census, this research (1) documents the scope and uneven practice of forced removal; (2) suggests how unintended return is affecting Mexico, Guatemala, and Honduras; and (3) develops the *unintended returnee* as an important mobility subject. *Key Words:* *deportation, Latinos, mobility, undocumented, unintended return, U.S. immigration policy.*

自从 2000 年以来, 有高达四百二十万的破纪录人次被美国递解出境, 在所有的递解者中, 拉丁美洲的移民佔了百分之九十三以上。美国政策转向强制递解 (一般被指称为“遣返”), 凸显出拉丁裔所经历的众多能动性政治与自相矛盾之事。他们流动且离开祖国的决定, 经常导致在美国面临各种法律的挑战, 并可能限制他们在美国的能动性, 且有时会导致他们因强迫遣返所面临的非自愿移动。本文植基于对创造非预期返回的能动性配置中生成的摩擦感兴趣的能动性政治之文献。本研究运用美国国土安全部所生产的行政数据, 政府档案纪录交换中心 (TRAC) 的数据, 以及美国人口调查, (1) 纪录强制递解出境的范畴与不均实践; (2) 指出非预期返回如何影响墨西哥、危地马拉与洪都拉斯; 以及 (3) 将非预期返回者建构成为重要的能动性主体。关键词: 遣返, 拉丁裔, 能动性, 无证移民, 非预期返回, 美国移民政策。

Desde el año 2000 se ha removido de los Estados Unidos la cifra récord de 4.2 millones de personas, guarismo en el que los inmigrantes de América Latina representan más del 93 por ciento de la remoción. El cambio de política migratoria hacia la expulsión forzada (comúnmente referida como deportación) subraya muchas de las políticas sobre movilidad y paradojas que experimentan los latinos. Su determinación por hacerse móviles y abandonar sus países de origen a menudo resulta en la confrontación de varios retos legales en los Estados Unidos que podrían limitar su movilidad dentro de este país y, a veces, resultar en su involuntaria movilidad del regreso forzado. Este artículo está fundamentado en literatura sobre política de movilidad, interesada en las fricciones creadas dentro de las constelaciones de movilidad que determinan regreso no buscado. Con base en datos administrativos producidos por el Departamento de Seguridad Nacional, del Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC) [Centro de Información sobre Acceso a Registros Transaccionales] y del Censo de los Estados Unidos, esta investigación, (1) documenta la forma y práctica inequitativa de la remoción forzada; (2) sugiere cómo el regreso no intencional está afectando a México, Guatemala y Honduras; y (3) convierte al retornado involuntario en un sujeto de movilidad importante. *Palabras clave:* *deportación, latinos, indocumentados, retorno involuntario, política migratoria de los EE.UU.*

Much of the U.S. discourse about immigration reform focuses on the fate of some 11 million undocumented individuals. Meanwhile, a formidable machinery of migration enforcement has been constructed over the last two decades that has led to 4.2 million removals since 2000 (Meissner et al. 2013;

Department of Homeland Security [DHS] 2014). More removals took place in this period than in the entire 107-year period between 1892 and 1999 (DHS 2011, table 36). The vast majority of these removals are to Latin America, mostly Mexico, and 90 percent of those removed are men (even though women

represent nearly half of the undocumented; Rosenblum and McCabe 2014). Hence, the gendered and racial removal of Latino immigrants is a politically charged and deeply personal issue for U.S. Latinos (Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013).

It is estimated that one in three Latinos in the United States knows someone who has been deported or detained in the last twelve months (Lopez, Morin, and Taylor 2010). The experience of removal from the United States and *unintended return* to a Latin American origin country is an increasingly familiar crisis for many Latino households. Yet the processes behind and consequences of these forced removals are less discussed in the English-language media, which instead focuses on the threat of unchecked Latino immigration (Chavez 2008; Golash-Boza 2012).

Since the 1996 Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, federal policy has concentrated on illegal immigration and securing national borders. Through the formation of a new federal agency (DHS), the application of enhanced technologies (biometrics and improved documents), and the expansion of new programs (Secure Communities and the 287(g) programs), the first thirteen years of the 2000s witnessed a surge in removals from the United States. Removals topped 200,000 for the first time in 2003, exceeded 300,000 in 2007, and topped 400,000 in 2012. In 2013, the last year for available data, 438,000 people were removed (DHS 2014).

Empirically, this article has three purposes. First, it examines the stunning rise in removals from the United States and the shifting terrain of court decisions at the state level with regard to enforcing or staying deportation orders. Second, an analysis of DHS administrative and U.S. census data shows the disproportionate impact removal has had on immigrants from three countries: Mexico, Honduras, and Guatemala. Third, the work introduces a new term, *unintended return*, and argues that it has conceptual and empirical merit. Theoretically, this work advances the politics of mobility literature (Coutin 2010; Cresswell 2010) by conceiving of unintended return as an outcome in constellations of mobility fraught with frictions and paradoxes.

Literature Review: Mobility Politics and Paradoxes

Geographers are actively engaged in a multidisciplinary effort to understand human mobility (Carling 2002; Cresswell 2006, 2014; Samers 2010; King 2012)

although much of the migration research does not explicitly engage the mobility literature. Carling (2002) raised the specter of involuntary immobility (people who would like to move but face barriers and experience unwanted fixity) when researching the mobility issues that Cape Verdeans experience. We believe that using a mobility perspective, rather than a migration-driven one, leads to consideration of the obstacles, stillnesses, and paradoxes embedded in mobility networks that include practices, representations, and physical movement (Cresswell 2010). In addition, this research is particularly concerned with the politics of mobility, especially the role that national borders, courts, and localities play in influencing mobility practices.

The mobility practices of migrants are heavily influenced by national governments that determine which migrants legally enter and under what terms. Yet many geographers argue that substate jurisdictions and transnational networks also influence the politics of immigrant selection, inclusion, and exclusion (Wright and Ellis 2000; Singer, Hardwick, and Brettell 2008; Varsanyi 2011; Leitner and Strunk 2014). U.S. states, counties, cities, and towns are the settings that shape how newcomers are received, through both inclusionary and exclusionary practices (Walker and Leitner 2011; Price 2014). The role of individual migrants and the social networks in which they are embedded also influence their mobility practices and destinations (Durand and Massey 2010).

Today, tolerance and intolerance in the United States toward immigrants, especially the undocumented, are in flux, given federal inaction on immigration reform. Geographers have been especially interested in places that exhibit hostile attitudes toward immigrants, with the literature suggesting that communities that undergo dramatic influxes in immigrant newcomers in a short period of time might be more inclined to see such groups as a threat (Winders 2006; Varsanyi 2008; Singer, Wilson, and DeRenzis 2009). An important study by Walker and Leitner (2011) maps 370 local governments that have proposed or implemented policies designed to address the undocumented, with the vast majority of these policies having been implemented since 2005. They found that local exclusionary ordinances outpaced inclusionary ones two to one. Regionally, the South was more exclusionary and the West was slightly more inclusive. Moreover, inner cities were more likely to promote inclusionary ordinances with regard to the undocumented, whereas the suburbs and rural areas were

more likely to be exclusionary (Walker and Leitner 2011). This devolution of immigration enforcement policy and the expansion of exclusionary ordinances have “pushed the border inward” in ways that help to explain the rise and patterns of deportation within the United States (Walker and Leitner 2011, 156).

In terms of human mobility representations, De Genova (2010) noted that deportation is a critical locus for a theoretical elaboration of “the co-constituted problems of the state and its putative sovereignty, on the one hand, and the elementary precondition of human freedom which is the freedom of movement” (39). Although forced removal is represented as a state’s ability to control and secure its territory, from the perspective of the detained and removed individual, forced removal represents a failure and even a crisis for individuals and households. Such tactics illustrate how migrants are “especially vulnerable to a ‘rescaling of personhood’ due to shifting conceptions of illegality, a rollback of rights, and a rise in deportation” (Varsanyi 2008, 882).

Given the rise in deportations from the United States, interest in the physical removal of people as mobility subjects is growing (Brabeck and Xu 2010; Coutin 2010; De Genova 2010; Golash-Boza 2012; Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013; Rosenblum and McCabe 2014). Today’s deportees face additional constraints that populations deported from the United States in the twentieth century did not. The U.S.–Mexico border is more fortified, which makes illegal land entry more difficult and expensive (Meissner et al. 2013). Second, once someone has been removed, the possibilities of legal entry are postponed for at least ten years, which undermines family unification. Third, as the numbers of unintended returns grow, local jurisdictions in the United States must deal with more fragmented and needy households, especially when male income earners are removed, leaving behind women and often U.S. citizen children (Cardoso et al. 2014).

There have always been deportations, yet the fact that the United States expels so many Latinos underscores a mobility paradox in the age of migration that coexists within a deportation regime (De Genova 2010). Unintended return is a by-product of constellations of mobility grounded in particular historical and geographical settings. The practices, representations, and physical reality of mobility (or immobility) differ depending on the setting, country of origin, and gender of those targeted for removal. Golash-Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013) framed such forced mobilities as a “gendered racial removal program” driven by

male joblessness, the War on Terror, and the criminalization of Black and Latino men by police. The disproportionate removal of men is undisputed, but the reasons for it are complex and cannot be answered with the data used in this study.

Methodology and Definitions

This article relies on data from the DHS, the Transactional Records Access Clearinghouse (TRAC), and findings from the literature. There are two deportation classifications—returns and removals—used by DHS. *Returns*, sometimes termed voluntary departures, are identified as the deportation of undocumented individuals not based on a formal order of removal. They are mostly noncriminal apprehensions conducted by the Border Patrol at points of entry and along the Mexico–U.S. border. When an individual admits that his or her attempted entry was unauthorized, the person voluntarily forgoes any due-process procedures and is relocated outside the country. The number of returns hit an all-time high of 1.6 million in 2000, yet this figure has steadily declined and reached a forty-year low of 178,371 in 2013.¹

Removals (including expedited removals) are the focus of this research. *Removals* generally pertain to those deportations ordered by a judge from the Executive Office of Immigration Review for criminal and noncriminal violations. Individuals subjected to this removal procedure are able to obtain legal counsel at their own expense and are provided with avenues to appeal a court decision. Over the past decade, however, Congress has granted the DHS new powers so that all deportees do not have to be presented with an official charge to immigration courts to be removed as an undocumented individual. Examples include when an undocumented person is convicted of a crime (even a minor one), DHS has the authority to administratively deport an individual without an immigration hearing. This deportation process is catalogued as an expedited removal and has accounted for nearly 1.2 million removals since 2003 (Rosenblum and McCabe 2014). Likewise, reinstatement of final removal orders, which are given to an immigrant who reenters the United States after a prior removal order, do not require a formal hearing or review for expulsion (DHS 2011).

Removals can happen anywhere in the United States, not just along the border. Individuals can be removed after entering into the country for only days or after several years. Most removal apprehensions near the border occur within the first two weeks of a

migrant crossing into the United States, whereas the majority of the apprehensions in the interior occur among migrants who have entered the United States at least three years before (Rosenblum and McCabe 2014). The majority of removals are noncriminal, meaning that the only reason for the removal is that the person does not have the legal right to stay in the United States. In 2013 removals reached an all-time high at 438,421 individuals. At the national level, the decline in returns and the rise of removals is a major change in enforcement patterns. Fewer returns suggest that the number of people trying to enter the United States by illegally crossing the U.S.–Mexico border is declining. The rise in removals suggests that more immigrants (including the undocumented) are being removed from the United States than ever before.

To analyze variations in removal proceedings, we obtained information through the TRAC database maintained at Syracuse University. TRAC uses the Freedom of Information Act to obtain federal government records, which provides statistics by district court and state. More than fifty immigration courts exist throughout the country, each responsible for managing

deportation proceedings in its specific geographic location, which could include multiple states. TRAC's ability to capture deportation orders at a subnational level is used to analyze the geography of removal (TRAC 2014).

From Removals to Unintended Return

More than 4.2 million removals occurred between 2000 and 2013 (DHS 2014). Latin American countries accounted for 94 percent of all removals from the United States between 2000 and 2013. Mexico dominates, accounting for seven out of every ten removals for a total of 3 million. Nearly 800,000 Central Americans were also removed between 2000 and 2013, with the incidence of removal increasing dramatically after 2006. Guatemala (296,110) and Honduras (275,113) produced the most Central American removals, followed by El Salvador (183,418; DHS 2014). By contrast, removals of South Americans totaled about 140,000; the frequency of removals for South Americans peaked in 2005 when 14,500 people were removed (Figure 1).

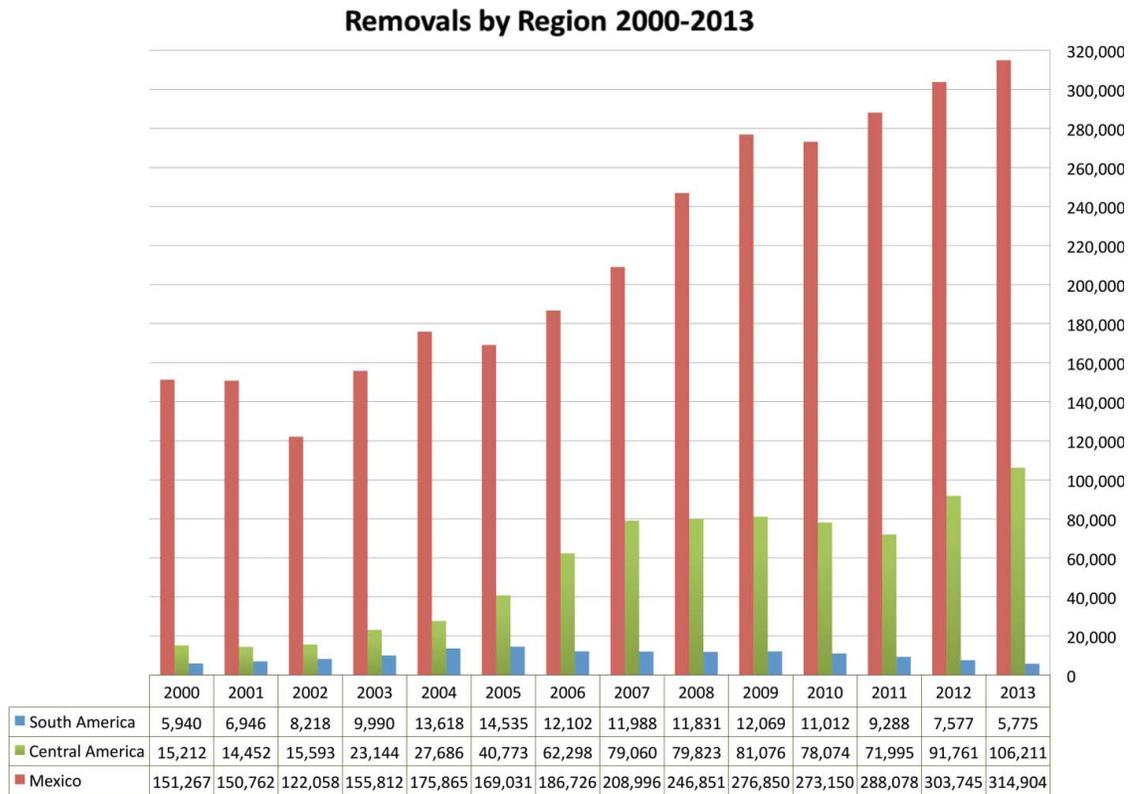


Figure 1. Latin American removals from the United States: 2000–2013. Removals to South America, Central America, and Mexico are shown in this graph. Removals increase substantially after 2006 for both Mexico and Central America. Reaching an all-time high in 2013, the last year data are available. The peak for South American removals, a much smaller number, occurs in 2005. *Source:* Department of Homeland Security (2014). (Color figure available online.)

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When comparing the number of removals to Latin American countries in 2000 with 2013, there was an increase of 148 percent. Yet the increases for Central American countries were much greater: Guatemala (930 percent), Honduras (666 percent), and El Salvador (340 percent) experienced the sharpest rises in the number of removals from 2000 to 2013. In contrast, removals to Mexico increased by 108 percent.

Because many removals are undocumented individuals, the size and composition of the undocumented population in the United States should influence removal trends. Immigrants from Mexico and Central America account for over two thirds of the estimated 11.5 million unauthorized in the United States in 2011, yet they account for 91 percent of the removals (Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Mexico (6.8 million), El Salvador (660,000), Guatemala (520,000), and Honduras (380,000) are the four nations with the largest estimated unauthorized populations. In addition, Ecuador's unauthorized population in the United States is ranked ninth. Yet other undocumented source countries such as China, the Philippines, India, Korea, and Vietnam have unauthorized estimates ranging from 170,000 to 280,000 people (Brick, Chalinor, and Rosenblum 2011; Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Their rates of removal, though, are proportionally much lower than those from Latin America.

For many years removals were reserved for immigrants with criminal convictions. The growth in non-criminal removals to Latin America since 2000 suggests that removal strategies are increasingly including the undocumented along with people who have committed serious crimes.² For Guatemala, 74.3 percent of removals are noncriminal, Honduras is 70.6 percent, and El Salvador is 63.2 percent. Overall, 61 percent of Latin American removals were in the non-criminal category from 2000 to 2013 (DHS 2014). Although criminal removals account for a growing share of removals, many of these are for nonviolent crimes, traffic crimes (including driving under the influence and other traffic offenses), and immigration crimes (Rosenblum and McCabe 2014).

The Shifting Constellation of Removal Practices

Removal rates vary by state within the United States. It is not surprising that the top deportation states in the United States also receive the most immigrants (Texas, California, Florida, and New York) and particularly the

most Latino and unauthorized immigrants (Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Even comparing these major destination states, however, federal courts in Texas are more likely to remove someone for an immigration charge than federal courts in California. California receives many more Latino immigrants and its estimated undocumented population in 2011 was 2.8 million versus 1.8 million for Texas (Hoefler, Rytina, and Baker 2012). Texas, however, had one third more removal proceedings than California from 2000 to 2010 (430,000 from Texas vs. 320,000 from California).

Analysis of the TRAC data demonstrates shifting trends in the application of prosecutorial discretion, which can result in a stay from removal, especially after new guidelines were introduced in June 2011 by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Director John Morton.³ In 2011 only 30 percent of cases brought to federal courts on immigration charges resulted in a person being allowed to stay in the country; the rest (70 percent) were removed. By 2014, with the new guidelines fully in place, 49 percent of cases were granted a stay from removal.

Federal courts adjudicate federal laws, yet the outcomes regarding stays from removal vary tremendously when federal courts are compared by the state in which they are located. Table 1 compares the percentage of individuals allowed to stay in twenty-seven states plus Puerto Rico in 2011 and 2014.⁴ In 2011 the rates of stay from removal ranged from a high of 62 percent in New York to a low of 6 percent in Louisiana. In 2011, federal courts in New York exhibited ten times more tolerance than federal courts in Louisiana. The settings that exhibited more tolerance in 2011 included several major immigrant destination states such as New York, California, Massachusetts, Florida, and Hawaii along with Puerto Rico and Oregon. In contrast, federal courts in Louisiana, Georgia, Arizona, Utah, Texas, Minnesota, and Ohio were much more likely to remove people. The federal courts in Texas (16 percent) and Arizona (12 percent) seldom granted stays from removal in 2011.

By 2014, nearly half (49 percent) of all federal cases for immigration-only charges resulted in a stay from removal. This demonstrates the impact of the 2011 prosecutorial discretion guidelines with regard to handling removal proceedings. Courts in Oregon, New York, California, New Jersey, Puerto Rico, Virginia, and Massachusetts exhibited the most tolerance, with at least 59 percent of the cases resulting in a stay from removal. Federal courts in Georgia, Louisiana, Utah, Michigan, and Texas were at the bottom of the 2014

Table 1. The percentage of immigration-only charges stayed from removal by state for all origin groups, 2011 and 2014

State	2014 percentage stayed (immigration charge only) for all national groups	2011 percentage stayed (immigration charge only) for all national groups	Change (2011–2014) (%)
Oregon	73	55	19
New York	70	62	9
California	60	43	17
New Jersey	59	38	21
Puerto Rico	59	56	3
Virginia	59	39	20
Massachusetts	59	44	15
Arizona	55	12	43
Minnesota	55	17	38
Nebraska	55	19	36
Florida	54	45	9
Washington	54	24	30
Colorado	53	23	29
Hawaii	50	43	7
Entire U.S.	49	30	20
Pennsylvania	48	27	21
Tennessee	48	28	20
Nevada	42	27	15
Illinois	41	21	20
North Carolina	41	32	9
Maryland	40	47	–6
Connecticut	40	43	–3
Ohio	35	18	17
Missouri	35	19	16
Texas	34	16	18
Michigan	33	20	13
Utah	32	13	19
Louisiana	25	6	19
Georgia	23	9	13

Note: In 2011, 30 percent of cases resulted in stays from removal, but outcomes by state varied from a low of 6 percent to a high of 62 percent. By 2014, with the implementation of new prosecutorial discretion guidelines, 49 percent of cases on immigration charges only resulted in a stay from removal. Oregon courts granted stays from removal in 73 percent of cases, showing the most tolerance toward the undocumented. Georgia courts granted stays from removal in only 23 percent of cases, reflecting the least leniency toward the undocumented. *Source:* TRAC (2014).

rankings, with only 23 percent to 34 percent of cases resulting in a stay from removal. The most significant changes were in the federal courts in Arizona, Minnesota, and Nebraska. Federal courts in these states went from very low rates of stays from removal in 2011 to rates of 55 percent in 2014, well above the national average. Every state in Table 1 showed an increase in the percentage of people allowed to stay in 2014 with the exception of Maryland and Connecticut, which had declines of 6 percent and 3 percent, respectively.

When examining the same data set for Mexican nationals only (see Table 2), the rates of immigrant stays were far lower in 2011 at 13 percent but improved significantly in 2014 to 42 percent. This is still below

the national average of 49 percent for all country groups in 2014. Federal courts in Oregon, North Carolina, California, Arizona, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Tennessee issued stays from removal in more than half of all cases (ranging from 52 to 74 percent). What is notable about this list is that it includes two southern states, North Carolina and Tennessee, which as new destinations have been recognized for their more exclusionary practices toward immigrants and the undocumented (Winders 2005; Walker and Leitner 2011). Federal courts in the southern states of Louisiana and Georgia, however, had the lowest rates of staying removals. Arizona and Nebraska are also states that have engaged in more exclusionary practices, especially

Table 2. The percentage of immigration-only charges stayed from removal by state for Mexican nationals, 2011 and 2014

State	2014 percentage stayed (immigration charge only) for Mexican nationals	2011 percentage stayed (immigration charge only) for Mexican nationals	Change (2011–2014) (%)
Oregon	74	43	31
North Carolina	58	19	38
California	57	36	21
Arizona	54	9	45
Nebraska	53	10	42
Minnesota	52	7	46
Tennessee	52	13	39
Puerto Rico	50	50	0
Washington	49	14	35
Florida	48	18	30
Massachusetts	48	19	29
Colorado	44	18	27
Entire U.S.	42	13	29
New York	39	15	24
Virginia	38	13	25
Pennsylvania	36	6	30
Nevada	35	13	22
Missouri	35	11	24
New Jersey	34	10	24
Illinois	31	9	23
Texas	29	12	17
Connecticut	28	15	13
Utah	26	7	19
Maryland	25	19	6
Ohio	24	3	21
Hawaii	23	22	1
Michigan	21	6	15
Georgia	17	3	15
Louisiana	14	3	11

Note: The rates of immigrant stays from removal are far lower for Mexican nationals. In 2011 only 13 percent of immigration-only cases resulted in a stay from removal for Mexicans at the national level, with considerable variation by state location of federal courts. By 2014 a much higher percentage of Mexicans (42 percent) received stays from removal nationally, suggesting the impact of new prosecutorial discretion guidelines. *Source:* TRAC (2014).

Arizona's notorious SB1070 bill, but the TRAC data reflect a more inclusionary shift since 2014.

The data present a contradictory picture in which DHS and federal courts in particular states project different rates of tolerance or intolerance toward the undocumented. Nationally, more immigrants are being removed than ever. The DHS budget is for 400,000 removals per year, a target more or less maintained throughout the Obama administration by focusing on criminal removals but also using more expedited removals that bypass court proceedings. At the same time, immigration cases that make it to federal courts are being met with more stays from removals. Added to this mix are people with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), created through executive action by President Obama in 2012. DACA has

protected more than 700,000 undocumented youth from removal and given them work authorization and access to driver's licenses (Singer, Svajlenka, and Wilson 2015).⁵ Yet, this is only a temporary protection and must be renewed every two years.

The TRAC data also show that when court location and country of origin are considered (in the case of Mexicans), there are major differences in how federal courts decide who should be removed. This suggests that local context matters, even in federal court proceedings. There is growing variation in how states and cities are addressing the undocumented. In October 2013, for example, California Governor Jerry Brown signed the Trust ACT, which limits local and state police from engaging in the removal of noncriminal unauthorized immigrants in California. Addressing

public safety concerns, the undocumented can also get driver's licenses in California. Now, more than ever, the policies and practices toward the undocumented in the United States are decentralizing, which makes for even more complex constellations of mobility.

What Unintended Return Means for Latin Americans' Mobility

The unintended return of more than 4 million people from the United States to Latin America since 2000 is a major issue for Latinos and Latin American countries, especially Mexico. We conclude by suggesting what unintended return means for Latin America and why it requires more scholarly attention. Generally, return migrants in Latin America are a source of pride, even envy, in communities where they cluster; they are often constructed as positive agents for economic development and social change (Potter, Conway, and Phillips 2005; Jones 2011). Yet unintended return has far more negative connotations, shifting focus toward communities and countries of origin that receive those involuntarily removed.

Unintended return often begins suddenly and without warning. Like a lightning strike, a migrant can be stopped for a traffic violation or caught up in a workplace raid and suddenly be channeled back to his or her country of origin (often after months of detention and prolonged immobility). Rather than a triumphant return with new possessions, financial resources for investment, and even one's entire family, the unintended returnee often has little to show after expensive and risky border crossings and perhaps years of toil abroad. Coutin (2010) argued that deportations shift the meaning of one's home country from a place of familiarity and welcome to a "zone of confinement." The process of forced removal often results in financial calamity: Remittances are no longer sent, mortgages cannot be paid, and savings are rapidly depleted. There is an emerging literature that addresses what happens to those jurisdictions that produce deportees and receive unintended returnees (Hagan, Eschbach, and Rodriguez 2008; Hagan, Castro, and Rodriguez 2010; Hamann and Zúñiga 2011; Wheatley 2011; Hiemstra 2012), but more is needed given the scale of the phenomenon and its influence on mobility practices and representations.

Mexico eclipses all other countries by its sheer number of unintended returns, with some 3 million since

2000. Twelve million Mexican-born individuals live in the United States along with 35 million people of Mexican ancestry. The demographic and social ties between Mexico and the United States run deep. Thus, even in the case of removal from the U.S. territory, a return to the United States at some later date is possible, through legal or unauthorized means. When comparing the current size of the Mexican-born population in the United States with the number of removals, it is equivalent to nearly one in four foreign-born Mexicans in the United States who have been removed since 2000.

The research on unintended return from Mexico shows loss of income, family strain, social stigma, and the difficulties of reintegration, especially for young children and youth who have grown up in the United States and must now be integrated into Mexican schools (Hamann and Zúñiga 2011; Wheatley 2011). The number of deported men in their twenties and thirties who grew up in the United States and speak limited Spanish has grown so significantly that it has sparked a boom in English call centers in Mexico. Tijuana has thirty-five call centers employing nearly 10,000 workers; it is estimated that nearly half of these workers experienced unintended return (Spagat and Millan 2014). Mexico even has its own DREAMer population: youth raised in the United States who speak mostly English and are struggling to get their educational credentials recognized so they can work or continue with higher education (Anderson and Solis 2014).

Proportionally, the impact of unintended return might be greater for Honduras and Guatemala. Like Mexicans, Central Americans are leaving their countries in search of jobs, reuniting with family members, or seeking safety from rampant violence. Yet, their migratory roots in the United States are not as deep. Removals of Hondurans from 2000 to 2013 are equivalent to 55 percent of the Honduran population that currently lives in the United States. Similarly, since 2000, the removal of Guatemalans is equivalent to 36 percent of current foreign-born stock population in the United States. Removals of Salvadorans are numerically and proportionally less, equal to 15 percent of the 1.2 million foreign-born Salvadorans in the United States. Many Salvadorans receive temporary protected status (TPS), which provides a legal means to remain in the United States, shielding many from removals due to immigration violations alone. Scholarly and journalist research on the impact of

unintended return on Central American communities is limited but growing (Hagan et al. 2008; Martinez 2013; Cardoso et al. 2014).

Each day chartered planes filled with deportees land in these Central American countries, as political leaders and nongovernmental organizations scramble to address the needs of growing numbers of unintended returnees. Guatemala has been a leader in responding to this crisis. In 2007 the Guatemalan Congress created CONAMIGUA (*Consejo Nacional de Atención al Migrante de Guatemala*) to coordinate among various government authorities responsible for protecting the rights of migrants and returnees. The newly returned are processed at a designated airport facility and are provided with a bag lunch, a phone call, and bus fare to their homes. In 2014 the government refurbished temporary shelters to house migrants who cannot immediately find family or return home (O'Keefe 2014). Guatemala also launched its *Quédate* (Stay) program, urging Guatemalans by radio, television, and the Internet not to leave. The same program built two technical centers for returned youth in need of vocational skills in 2015. How many of the unintended returnees remain in Central America or try to leave again is unknown.

Unintended return is one possible outcome in a friction-filled and politicized constellation of mobility actors and actions existing in the United States today. In practice, men are much more likely to end up as unintended returnees than women. Also, the U.S. state in which one resides, the court where one's case is heard, and one's country of origin are all factors that affect mobility outcomes with regard to forced removal. Due to new federal guidelines regarding prosecutorial discretion, more undocumented migrants have received stays from removal, yet removal figures are at an all-time high.

The U.S. policy shift toward forced removals underscores a mobility paradox for many Latinos: Their determination to be mobile and leave their countries of origin is driven by poverty, violence, wage differentials, employment opportunities in the United States, and social networks. Entering the United States without legal authorization quickly places them in a constellation of relationships that limits mobility and sometimes results in involuntary mobility. Unintended return is an expression of forced mobility that underscores the putative sovereignty of the state (in this case the United States) to enforce its territorial boundaries no matter the human or financial costs. At the same time it forces Latin American states to deal

with 4 million returnees, some of whom are disconnected from their homeland or traumatized by their dangerous journey to the north. Unless major immigration reform happens in the United States, offering some relief from the threat of removals, the human tide of unintended returnees will continue to pour into Mexico and Central America.

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Notes

1. It is important to note that someone can be returned or removed more than once, and each count will be included in the *Yearbook of Immigration Statistics*.
2. Criminal removals vary in terms of seriousness. Removal of foreign-born individuals, regardless of legal status, convicted of homicide, sexual offenses, drug-related offenses, or driving under the influence regularly occurs. Yet the American Immigration Council argues that more of the criminal removals are individuals convicted of immigration crimes (e.g., illegal reentry) or traffic crimes (driving without a license).
3. The U.S. ICE Memorandum of 17 June 2011, Exercising Prosecutorial Discretion Consistent with the Civil Immigration Enforcement Priorities of the Agency for the Apprehension, Detention and Removal of Aliens, is available at www.ice.gov.
4. Not every state has a federal court where immigration charges are adjudicated; some states such as California, Texas, and New York have multiple courts.
5. A second executive order by President Obama in November 2014 expanded the individuals protected under DACA and created DAPA for the undocumented parents of U.S. citizen children. This executive order is currently held up in federal courts and has not been enacted. It has the potential to protect up to 4 million undocumented from removal.

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MARIE PRICE is a Professor of Geography and International Affairs in the Department of Geography at the George Washington University, Washington, DC 20052. E-mail: mprice@gwu.edu. Her research includes immigration's impact on development and social change at various geographic scales in the United States and Latin America.

DEREK BREESE graduated from The George Washington University in 2012 with a Master's of Arts in Geography. E-mail: dbreese@gwu.edu. His research interests include immigration, Latin America, race, and identity.