

## WHY ARE UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS HERE?

### THE LONG HISTORY OF US MILITARY AND ECONOMIC INTERVENTIONS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Undocumented immigrants from Mexico, Central & South America and the Caribbean leave their families and homelands out of fear of violence, political/religious or ethnic persecution, malnutrition and their inability to survive economically. Unlike refugees admitted to this country for many of the same reasons, they are not afforded refugee status as defined by the United Nations because successive U.S. governments have supported the authoritarian regimes that force them to flee.

U.S. intervention in the Western Hemisphere dates to the Monroe Doctrine of 1823. In the period 1898-1994, our government has intervened to change regimes in Latin America 41 times, 17 of which were direct military actions. The following list documents the history of these interventions as well as significant dates of U.S. economic colonialism in the region.

1804: Louisiana Purchase began the U.S. absorption of territories claimed by European powers

1823: Monroe Doctrine proclaimed to oppose European colonialism in the Americas, stating that U.S. would view such acts as a threat to our security

1848: Treaty of Hidalgo with Mexico cedes California, Nevada, Utah, most of Arizona, half of New Mexico and a quarter of Colorado to the U.S.

1850-56: U.S. soldiers defend American-built railway in Panama

1898: U.S. defeats Spain in Spanish American War and annexes/controls Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines

1900: By this date, the U.S. controlled 80% of Mexican railways, 75% of Mexican mining and 50% of Mexican oil

1903: Platt Amendment restricts Cuban economic and political freedom; these controls remained in place until 1959

1917: The Jones Act requires that all goods shipped from a U.S. port to another U.S. port must be carried on U.S. owned vessels; this costs the Puerto Rican economy and people over \$500 million per year

1905: U.S. marines land in Honduras; in 1912, United Fruit began operations in Honduras. U.S. troops intervened in Honduras in 1912, 1919 and 1924.

1906-1909: U.S. occupies Cuba

1910: U.S. forces control Nicaragua's finances

1914-34: U.S. troops occupy Haiti

1916-24: U.S. troops occupy the Dominican Republic

1920-21: U.S. supports a coup in Guatemala

1912-33: U.S. troops occupy Nicaragua, fund and join the war against Sandino's peasant army in which 30,000 people are killed; from 1936-77, the U.S. supported the Somoza regime

1934: U.S. supports Batista coup in Cuba

1946: U.S. founds the School of the Americas (SOA), re-named Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001; since its inception, SOA has trained more than 64,000 Latin American soldiers who have returned home to target, torture, disappear and kill thousands of union organizers, clergy, human rights activists and student leaders

1947: Operation Bootstrap incentivizes U.S. industrialists to move manufacturing to Puerto Rico, destabilizing the island's agriculture and proving incapable of addressing chronic unemployment and movement of Puerto Ricans to the mainland

1954: The C.I.A. and United Fruit Company stage a coup in Guatemala, ousting democratically elected President Arbenz. Subsequent authoritarian governments funded by the U.S., along with right-wing death squads, murdered more than 200,000 civilians (primarily indigenous Mayans)

Late 1950's: U.S. owned 90% of Cuban mining, 80% of Cuban utilities, 50% of Cuban railways and 40% of Cuban sugar

1961: C.I.A. backed Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba fails; this was followed by innumerable CIA plots and attempts to assassinate Castro, none of which succeeded

1966: Green Berets take part in Operation Guatemala in which 8,000 people are killed

1973: C.I.A. backs a Chilean military coup led by Augusto Pinochet against democratically elected Salvador Allende; during Pinochet's regime, 40, 018 Chileans were imprisoned, tortured and/or disappeared

1979-1991: U.S. backs El Salvador's right-wing governments and death squads, many of whom trained at SOA, largely responsible for 75,000 deaths

1981-90: U.S. covertly sells arms to Iran in order to fund Nicaraguan Contras in their fight against Sandanistas

1983: U.S. invades Grenada, population 96,000

1989: U.S. occupies Panama

1996: The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) signed by the U.S. and Mexico. While promoting job creation along the border, NAFTA has devastated Mexican corn farmers (through dumping of US corn), small businesses and manufacturing. In first decade of NAFTA, 2.5 million Mexicans lost their jobs and Mexican immigration to U.S. doubled.

2003: The Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) is signed by the U.S., El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Guatemala. As small farmers faced competition from U.S. grains, multinational corporations invested in huge hydroelectric and mining projects displacing rural populations and U.S. owned clothing manufacturers abuse workers. Over 2 million Central Americans have migrated to the U.S. since CAFTA was signed.

2009: U.S. supported military coup, led by SOA graduates, against democratically-elected Honduran President Manuel Zeyala; thousands of activists, organizers, campesinos and students have been killed. Almost 30% of unaccompanied minors entering the U.S. are Honduran

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