

**Recovering citizenship post-deportation in Mexico-US border****Recuperar la ciudadanía post-deportación en la frontera México-Estados Unidos**

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**ABSTRACT**

This article aims to analyze the importance of formal citizenship in the reintegration process of people deported from the United States to Mexico. The analysis parts from the case study of deportations to the border city of Tijuana, Baja California, which includes 68 in-depth interviews focused on redocumentation to demonstrate their national affiliation. The main findings show that the condition of documentation plays a strategic role in the processes of re-citizenship in the countries of origin. Upon return by a process of deportation, there is a revitalization of the importance of formal citizenship that seemed outweighed in the face of the multiple forms of affiliation, belonging, and local participation. The role of private and social actors is strategic in the processes of redocumentation and recovery of the relationship of individuals with the State, which also reflects the reproduction of multiple social inequalities between subjects of the Mexican State.

*Keywords:* 1. Deportation, 2. formal citizenship, 3. redocumentation, 4. Tijuana, 5. United States.

**RESUMEN**

El objetivo del artículo es analizar la importancia de la ciudadanía formal en el proceso de reinserción de personas deportadas desde Estados Unidos a México. El análisis parte del estudio de caso de sujetos deportados que viven en Tijuana, Baja California, con 68 entrevistas en profundidad enfocadas en la redocumentación para demostrar su adscripción nacional. Los principales hallazgos muestran que la condición de documentación es un elemento importante en los procesos de reciudadanización en el estado del país de origen. En el retorno por deportación existe una revitalización de la importancia de la ciudadanía formal, que parecía rebasada frente a las múltiples formas de pertenencia y participación local. El papel de actores privados y sociales resulta estratégico en los procesos de redocumentación y recuperación de la relación de los individuos con el Estado, lo que refleja también la reproducción de múltiples desigualdades sociales entre las personas deportadas, y respecto del resto de la población mexicana.

*Palabras clave:* 1. deportación, 2. ciudadanía formal, 3. redocumentación, 4. Tijuana, 5. Estados Unidos.

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## INTRODUCTION

In Mexico, the return of deported population from the United States represents a challenge of re-citizenship. Thus, it requires an understanding of day-to-day mechanisms for the exercise of rights, obligations, and community affiliations in the context of contemporary global mobilities. Deportations and massive repatriations of Mexicans from the United States are not a new phenomenon in both countries' migration history (Alanís, 2007; Cardoso, 1977). However, they currently take place within a globalization context marked by the liberal State paradox (Hollifield, 2006), where identity documents have played a key role in the exercise of citizenship.

Over the past two decades hundreds of thousands of people have been deported to Mexico from the United States. Unlike what happened in the late 20th century, when deportees were held at the border, detentions and deportations of people with a long-term stay in the United States have increased in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Including immigrants who arrived as children or at a young age and did not carry out the documentation processes required as Mexicans. This phenomenon, although uncommon among deportees, provides an opportunity to analyse formal citizenship processes in relation to immigrant deportations to sending countries.

As Ngai (2004) states, the history of Mexican migration has demonstrated that the enforcement practice which impeded the regular entry of Mexicans to the United States, made them 'illegals' without rights in said country. Currently, less is known about how deported and repatriated people live without documents in their country of origin, with their citizenship status being cast into doubt.

This article analyses the role of the Mexican identity documents in the process of integration of the population deported to border cities like Tijuana, Mexico. The article's hypothesis is that the condition of documentation plays a strategic role in the processes of re-citizenship, since the lack of such represents a source of inequality in their countries of origin (Sharma & Gupta, 2006; Therborn, 2015). There is a kind of revitalization of the importance of formal citizenship, which in general terms is considered as the national subjects' status with political and legal rights, and with responsibilities in accordance with the law (Pani, 2016, p. 135). Notion which seemed outweighed toward the multiple forms of affiliation, belonging and local participation, and a State which has gradually extended citizen rights (Marshall, Casado & Miranda, 1997).

## CONCEPTUAL THEORETICAL APPROACH: CITIZENSHIP, MOBILITY, DEPORTATION

The studies on the nexus between citizenship and mobility-deportation have been done by contemplating citizenship from the place of birth or origin (before migration), or in the place of migration as foreigners (destination). But, what about the citizenship in the process of return to the place of origin, given it is "sponsored" by the State, as Golash-

Boza and Hondagneu-Sotelo (2013) name deportation? We are moving toward a conceptualization of citizenship as a process that changes and realigns itself along the individuals' migratory trajectory and, with respect to this study, along the deported population who need to rebuild their lives in their countries of origin.

The liberal approach of citizenship, linked to national identity and individual-State relationship (Marshall, 1950), constituted the conceptual starting point for this article. Nevertheless, we broaden the analytical approach with the biopolitics and geopolitics contributions of Walters (2002) and Collyer (2012), who suggest that the relationship between citizenship, cross-border mobility and deportations must be seen as the result of populations' international governance. To the extent that the world and the economies have become globalized, the notion of citizenship has become the debate regarding rights and responsibilities even more. New approaches seek to overcome the nationalist view and invite to examine, as Glenn (2000) states, a double stance that addresses the legitimacy at both traditional notions of rights associated with the membership in a community (citizenship rights) and universal rights unrelated to the membership in particular nation states (personal or human rights).

Pivotal aspects that have defined the membership in a nation-State for the granting of freedoms and rights are *domicilization* (Tilly, 1978) and documentation (Horton, 2020) as forms and schemes of control and states' management of the population's mobility. This is what Tilly (1978) calls fixed citizenship, associated with a notion of a spatially fixed citizenship, which means a formal and political citizenship. The identification documents operate as a bureaucratic inscription to the State (Horton, 2020).

Fixed citizenship and identity assignation through documentation in citizenship discussions have a double function: as a right and as a requirement. In terms of rights, residence, and humane work as well as freedom of domestic and international mobility are the basic citizenship elements claimed on the State. As a requirement, residence proves to be a key element for selection and differentiation of the State on the individuals whereby the State controls the eligibility to the right of mobility (Heyman, 2020).

With the residence requirement, the national identity documentation has an utmost important ascriptive dimension yet practical at the same time. The national identity assignment and recognition on the one hand, may be seen as a right and a necessary element for resource distribution, and as an element of subordination, control and surveillance on the other hand (Torpey, 1998) with positive effects for a population and negative ones for another. Thus, creating significant social inequalities (Horton, 2020).

With deportations, the inequalities that formal citizenship raises, have become more visible among the subjects within the same State. Authors like Collyer (2012) and Fischer (2013) consider that migration entails an alienation between State and citizens, and this is not something automatically retrievable with border crossing or a full benefit following return. As Menjívar (2006) states in her studies about foreign migrants in the United

States, we consider that subjects can move between multiple forms of citizenship at some point in their lives. But that the control over their movement also remains and extends when they return to their place of ‘origin’, where the citizens’ State classifies and limits them through bureaucratic agents and mechanisms. As Lipsky (1999) calls it *street-level bureaucracy*, and which Horton (2020) defines as mechanisms of bureaucratic inscription to the State.

This framework of relationships and mechanisms that is built in the everyday life of deportees in a procedural way for the exercise of their rights and obligations, is what we call *re-citizenship*. Assuming even with the distance linkage programs on each original national State, migrant people live in what Coutin (2011) calls a liminal citizenship status in legal terms, or de-citizenship according to Moreno (2014). Such liminal condition extends to what we call post deportation (Schuster & Majidi, 2013; Dingeman & Rumbaut, 2010). According to the latter, there is a continuity in the processes of illegality shaping on individuals with irregular migration status once deported to their countries of origin.

#### *Deported and repatriated: re-documentation and citizenship in Mexico*

The term repatriation, which has guided Mexican deportation policy for Mexican migrants by force or will, concerns the return and reintegration of Mexican people and their children whose place of residence was in the United States in an irregular migration status (Alanís, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Repatriation policy of Mexicans from U.S. territory was shaped in the early 20th century in the middle of the post revolution period. The first programs or official channels of Mexican repatriation were founded during the Great Depression in the United States (Guerin-González, 1985). During the *Bracero Program* (1942-1964) the repatriations issue ceased to be the spotlight for implementation of programs and blended into the discourse of post revolution nationalism. The nationalist tone of repatriations began to fade after the year 2000 (Délano, 2014), when remittances had become a source of foreign exchange revenue of utmost importance for national economy.

The National Institute for Migration (*Instituto Nacional de Migración*, INM) was created in Mexico during the last decade of the 20th century and, in 1998 the Citizenship Act was passed, which allowed double nationality. In the United States, the new notion of anti-terrorism security and the economic crisis in 2008 featured the new wave of deportations, reaching almost four million in a decade (UPM, 2018), and so the revival of repatriation. In 2007 the Repatriation Program, subordinate to the INM, was created. In 2012, the Human Repatriation Program (*Programa de Repatriación Humana*, PRH) resumed the widespread official discourse of human rights, following the agreements signed internationally. A significant turn of PRH was the interest to identify Mexican

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<sup>3</sup> See article 81 General Population Act (1974), Repatriation chapter.

deportees, possibly in the light of the vast presence of based and in-transit Central American migrants.

A detailed examination of the processes that has defined identity assignation in Mexico shows the development both in the identity arrangements and mechanisms, and the security levels and increased requirements to obtain them, keeping pace with migration policy development. The birth certificate and voter credentials are the most important identification arrangements which are given only to Mexicans by birth. These are the main requested documents to returnees in their process of reintegration, although there are other documents, like the Unique Population Registry Key (*Clave Única de Registro de Población*, CURP) (Jacobo, 2017; Escobar, Lowell y Martin, 2013).

While throughout the history the registration system of population has been upgraded with the digitalization of birth certificates, for example, the incidence of under registration remains significant. On the one hand, not all birth certificates are digitalized nationwide. On the other, there is the case of returned people and deportees who are unaware of their place of registry, those who were not registered in Mexico or the ones registered in another country, for the most part in the United States (INEGI & UNICEF, 2018), and for the people who cannot access their birth certificate easily after deportation. They have been named ‘double undocumented’ (Selee, 2014).

Similarly, the access to voting credentials is a complex and difficult process. It has been documented that over the past decades a significant proportion of deportees who enter by any INM repatriation module, lack of identity papers that prove their Mexican citizenship. Even if the Nationality Act (*Ley de Nacionalidad*, 1998, Art. 3) establishes the birth certificate as a certifying document for the nationality, it is common that deportees do not carry it with them.

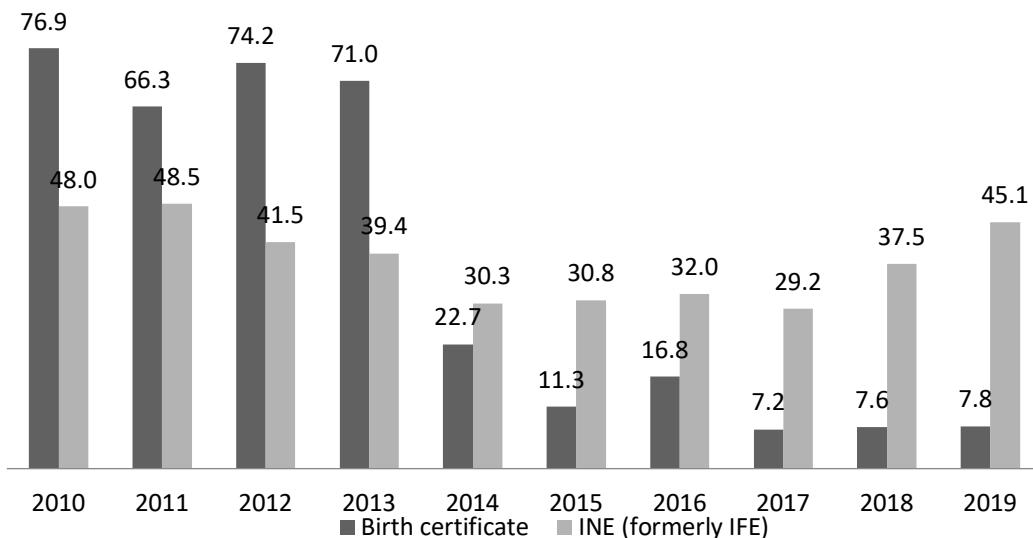
Graphic 1 shows that between 2010 and 2013, more than half of the population returned by immigration authorities from the United States did not have the INE,<sup>4</sup> and that this proportion increased substantially in the subsequent years. Between 2014 and 2017, when it was inquired whether they were carrying it, more than two thirds gave a negative reply. Afterwards, between 2018 and 2019 the data showed an increase in the percentage bringing back the trend of previous years. Likewise, regarding the birth certificate, it is noted that between the years 2010 and 2013 almost a third did not have it. In 2016 the percentage of those who were not carrying it at the time of deportation nearly doubled. This trend increased even more between 2017 and 2019. Changing the survey question goes to the heart of our argument, as the consequences on people’s experience

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<sup>4</sup> The Voter card is requested in order to obtain a passport, as a supporting document when applying for a job or when opening a bank account. It is granted by the Federal Electoral Institute (*Instituto Nacional Electoral*). Among the requirements for people who seek naturalization, that is, those without a birth certificate, is having resided for at least five years in Mexico and bearing witness of said residence.

regarding assimilation in Mexico are potentially different as they own or carry said documents.

Graphic 1. Identity document holding in the flow of people with a residence of one year or longer, deported by the US authorities (%)



\* Note: The question was modified. From 2010 to 2013 it was ‘Do you have the following documents?’ and since 2014 is ‘Do you bring with you the following documents?’

Source: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte *et al.* (2016).

This scenario enables understanding of the importance of the certificate of presumption of Mexican nationality granted by the PRH<sup>5</sup> (acronym in Spanish for Human Repatriation Program) for deportees upon entering Mexico. By law, migrating to the United States does not mean losing the Mexican citizenship by birth.<sup>6</sup> However, the latter seems to have dissociated in practice the longer the period of residence in the United States. It could even be argued that with the current mobility control policies, identity document holding is indeed a requisite. Not only for the access to basic rights but also for the free mobility in Mexican territory which, in terms of human rights, should be protected by the State. Yet at the same time, it must be acknowledged that document holding does not fully guarantee the recognition and full exercise of citizenship since this is driven by a complex framework of ‘fragile’ structural and subjective elements for returnees ranging from the normative to the procedural and pragmatic ones.

<sup>5</sup> In the municipality of Tijuana, this certificate is valid for six months. It allows to carry out legal procedures and to access the welfare provided by the local and state government.

<sup>6</sup> Since 1998, the Mexican nationality law allows the citizens to have other nationalities besides the Mexican (*Centro de Información y Asistencia a Mexicanos*, 2016).

## METHODOLOGY

This article draws on the research on the process of social integration of deportees to border cities. Throughout the field research and after having conducted the interviews, deportees started to concur regarding the challenges faced by their lack of Mexican identity documents. This finding led to revise the research and to locate the process of documentation as a key aspect for deportees' reintegration. It could also be observed that the effect of it is not for everyone, rather it depends on asset accumulation throughout their lives and the institutional framework of the returning place. The interviews were conducted between 2017 and 2018 in Tijuana, achieving 68 interviews with deportees and 16 with key informants.

In this article, 23 cases were selected and monitored over a period of 14 months and of whom we have solid information about their successful or unsuccessful documentation process (see Table 1). To test the hypothesis on the significance of documentation in the process of re-citizenship, we separated out people who at the time of the interview had managed to get Mexican identity documents from those who had not. The purpose of this was to examine two aspects. On the one hand we noted the distinct patterns of the documentation process, along with their agents and strategies. On the other, the lack of documents status allowed us to thoroughly analyze the unsuccessful cases and thus, the burden of the lack of documentation for re-citizenship and the coping strategies to face the State control mechanisms (Heyman, 2020).

The strategy to conduct the case studies included a planned extensive journey of the main deportee's residence and lodging locations in Tijuana. The variability of working and housing conditions was considered a key aspect for the analysis of all these cases in relation to the documentation process, successful or not. Special attention was paid to collect a variety of cases in terms of gender, although the majority were men in the final sample (18 men over 5 women), just as in the general population of deportees. As seen in Table 1, except for one case, the individuals were deported under Barack Obama administration, period in which it is known that deportations from the United States intensified.

Table 1. Arrangement of interviewed subjects according to document holding  
in Tijuana after deportation

Name**	Mechanism/Doc. agent Mx	State of birth	Year of birth	Age of first border crossing	Year of deportation
With	Soledad	Family in Tijuana	Jalisco	1972	2
	Salvador	Family in Veracruz	Veracruz	1975	2
	Carlos	Family in the United States	Jalisco	1980	3
	Ricardo	Family in Tijuana	Baja California	1985	3

Without documents*	Gonzalo	Family in the United States***	Baja California	1992	3	2013
	Javier	Call Center in Tijuana	Sinaloa	1956	6	2011
	Pablo	Family in the United States	Jalisco	1959	8	2014
	Diana	Family in Mexico City	CDMX	1976	13	2017
	Yuri	With documents during deportation	CDMX	1984	14	2013
	Dolores	With documents during deportation	Guanajuato	1981	16	2012
	Gustavo	OSC Program	Sinaloa	1968	17	2012
	Ignacio	Family in Tijuana	CDMX	1983	21	2013
	Amanda	With documents during deportation	CDMX	1967	25	2012
	Rafael	OSC Program/Call Center	Oaxaca	1968	29	2006
	Héctor	Without documents post deportation	Guerrero	1973	12	2013
	Sergio	Without documents post deportation	Morelos	1976	12	2015
	Leonardo	Loss of documents post deportation	Baja California	1988	13	2014
	Alberto	Loss of documents post deportation	Nayarit	1969	13	2013
	Daniel	Without documents post deportation	Chiapas	1988	13	2014
	Porfirio	Loss of documents post deportation	Jalisco	1968	15	2011
	Ernesto	Without documents post deportation	Chiapas	1969	15	2016
	Ramiro	Loss of documents post deportation	CDMX	1976	21	2009
	Diego	Without documents post deportation	Jalisco	1966	24	2014

\* Refers to document holding at the time of the interview: birth certificate and Voter Card (INE)

\*\* Pseudonyms were assigned.

\*\*\* With documents upon entering Mexico.

Source: Prepared by the authors based on fieldwork.

## DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENT AT THE MEXICAN BORDER

The Mexican border has played a strategic role in repatriation processes from United States as it represents the gateway to the Mexican territory, an increasingly long waiting area, and a settlement zone for immigrants in their journey to the United States. The border vicinity has been valued not only by the immigrants, but also by the different public and private stakeholders on both sides. In 2015, Tijuana was the most populated border city with approximately two million inhabitants (1,840,710) (EIC, 2015); it had the lowest levels of unemployment in the country and the largest number of border crossings in the world with its two international ports of entry. Tijuana has become a receiving city of deported population (Calva & Alarcón, 2018); a significant proportion of them stays in the city in hopes of crossing back, whether looking to maintain the family ties created throughout their lives in the United States, or to resume their lifestyle.

To understand the repatriated redocumentation process to Tijuana, the analysis needs to distinguish two necessary conditions: the first is the struggle for documentation by exploring the strategies and agents that facilitate the redocumentation process (14 cases), and the second is the struggle to live without documents (9 cases).

The first line of analysis is based on 14 cases with some type of documents. In general, it can be observed that a constant in this group is a higher educational background and bilingualism, as well as the active support networks in the United States. Family networks were very important in the process of documentation when family ties did not break down with deportation. Such findings can clearly be demonstrated in three cases: Javier, Pedro and Soledad emigrated with their parents to the United States when they were children or adolescents and returned to Mexico as adults. Despite having birth certificates their parents had kept, they lacked the document that allowed them to officially identify themselves as Mexicans. Besides, they had little knowledge about the Mexican legal and administrative framework.

The second line of analysis is based on 9 cases of undocumented Mexican people (see Table 1) with a wider diversity of conditions than the ones of documented people. Ernesto, Heriberto, Ramiro, Héctor, Daniel, Alberto and Porfirio migrated in their adolescence and youth, and after having lived for a long time in the United States (between 27 to 31 years) lost contact and support relations in their places of origin. When returning to Mexico, they were hindered by the lack of Mexican identity documents and facing the difficulty of not having a birth certificate or having problems to register in their places of birth or origin.

Both conditions –with and without documents– are marked by the different degrees of unawareness of the legal processes, regulations, and bureaucratic practices of their place of origin. The lack of understanding about the forms of bureaucratic practices leads to the exclusion to the rights of citizenship in Mexico. Being out of the country has undermined the full exercise of citizenship in broad terms, and it limits its discourse to the quest for basic welfare as further described and analyzed below.

### *Obtaining documents to live: mechanisms and agents*

The different ways to achieve documentation are varied and related to the human and social capitals they acquired while living in the United States. But, even for this sector of repatriated, redocumentation is not an easy process upon the arrival to the INM port of entry but rather an essential dispute where employment stakeholders, supporting human mobility infrastructure in the arrival city and social networks take part.

Once in Mexican territory, the repatriated enter a tunnel of what Lipsky (1999) calls the *street-level bureaucracy*, performed by specific individuals who interact directly with citizens, and who have discretion for the exercise of rights (Lipsky, 1999). The repatriated (14) who obtained their identity documents did so with the combined support of employers, relatives, and civil society organizations. In the following, the role of said agents and the response of the study population are analyzed.

#### *Employers as documentation providers*

Tijuana is an economically dynamic city; its municipality has the highest gross domestic product (GDP) in Baja California state and relatively higher salaries than in the rest of the country (Coubès and Silva, 2012). Tijuana's border vicinity makes it a strategic place for the operation of enterprises in several economic sectors (commercial, financial, and service).

The role of maquiladora and call center employers in the repatriated migrant's documentation process is so in that they have acquired workforce from them in said economic sectors. Specifically, in this high-technology communication industry, the *call centers*, have turned their attention to the repatriated having weighed their bilingual skills and their closeness to American culture (Hualde, Jurado, & Tolentino, 2015). In 2015, according to Jorge Oros, president of Baja California (BC) Call Centers Cluster, there were 12,000 workstations in the state; 8,000 of these in Tijuana (Caballero, 2015). Oros also explains that in 2016 there were 54 enterprises in the sector in Baja California that employed 18,000 people approximately (Uniradio Informa, 2016). Tijuana ranked fourth place nationally (15% national labor supply), just behind Mexico City, Monterrey and Guadalajara (Caballero, 2015).

Some call centers and maquiladoras have incorporated as part of the human resources department tasks the support for identity document (INE) management for those with the required expertise and knowledge for the company and its benefit.<sup>7</sup> Pedro's case serves as an example of the company's role in the repatriate's process of documentation.

Pedro had the Mexican birth certificate at the time of his deportation but did not have the voter card since he arrived in the United States at the age of 2. Pedro was deported

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<sup>7</sup> This was the case of the pilot project *Atención Integral a Deportados* (Comprehensive Aid to Deportees, AID), with a three-month pilot phase in the year 2017 (Sources, in-person communication, March 21 2017).

into Tijuana in 2010 at the age of 41. In that same port of entry where he was received, he was given information about a call center looking for repatriated bilingual people: “just after crossing I was offered a position -do you speak English? there are jobs which can make use of this and that. As you cross *La Línea*, they give you food, they give you.... they run tests on you, they give you... well, stuff like that. They give you service. And I fetched the numbers [of possible companies], and well, I called and went for an interview” (Pedro, in-person communication, March 8 2017). In the first few days after arrival, he stayed at the *Casa del Migrante* and he approached the company, where he was given information on how to obtain his documentation and he was issued letters of extension to get them. Meanwhile, he received computer training. In accordance with his story, this was the process:

... [in the repatriation module] they gave me a leaflet of the *call center*; it didn't say the name, like Mac Foundation or something like that, so I didn't go to the interviews, and they told me: “no, you can't. You have to get your documents”. I left there at the time of the elections [Mexican], so, I couldn't get my ID. I kept waiting. It took me some time, but I finally got it... I started to work so I could get the document. At the beginning I went [to the soup kitchen] and I met people who helped me with the signatures to get it, but while I was waiting for the ID, I started going to the computers, computer classes, because I didn't know anything about that. That was in Second St and Ocampo. They give us classes. It partly depends on the call center and partly on the Salesian priest... uhm... something like that, right there, upstairs. So, it means the help comes from these two (Pedro, in-person communication, March 8, 2017).

This was also the case of other deportees, like Javier, who crossed with his parents to the United States when he was 3. He got a residence permit through them and was deported in 2011 at the age of 31. So, when arrived in Mexico, he did not have the INE (formerly IFE) ID. Just like Pedro, upon the arrival in the Mexican port of entry, Javier was referred to a call center by the Mexican migration authority on account of his bilingualism. However, he could not process the Voter card because the presidential elections were drawing close. Although the company had already anticipated this with an alternate mechanism: the Postal identity card, that the Postal Service office issues for remittances collection.<sup>8</sup>

The other problem was that I didn't have the Voter card, the INE. And as I was deported in voting period in May 2012, no IDs were being processed by the National Electoral Institute by that time, until after the elections [...] I don't remember well who mentioned *Telvista*: “Go to *Telvista*, bilingual people go there”; perfect. I'll see what happens. Two months [later] upon my arrival, I arrived at *Telvista*. I told them what was going on with my ID and they told me

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<sup>8</sup>According to the Mexican postal service [*Correos de México* (n.d.)], it is the Postal identity card (*Cartilla de Identidad Postal*), issued by the Mexican postal service. The validity is one year, and it serves as identification to receive remittances.

-Don't worry. Go to the Post office. There they'll give you a sort of card with your picture, and we accept that as a temporary ID. Perfect, that was what I did, and I started to work in *Telvista* (Javier, in-person communication, March 8 2017).

Javier Works at *Telvista* now, the largest and oldest call center in Tijuana, launched in the late nineties as a *Teléfonos de México* (Telmex) branch. People who start the repatriation process begin to grasp the rough track of the documentation process in practice.

A possible conclusion is that employment agents' intermediation is sufficient only to continue with the documentation process together with social and human capitals of the repatriated (level of education, bilingualism, and financial and emotional support structures). However, this intermediation is necessary for providing the repatriated with information and resources to deal with the state's bureaucracy. In this way, the labor market seems to extend its tentacles to selectively supply itself of labor force, even of the most vulnerable sectors, and setting out the terms of re-documentation and re-citizenship.

#### *Family networks as facilitators*

Another access to the documents of identity is through family, either with resources given by the family to pay for procedures or transportation, providing orientation on the bureaucratic maze, or by testifying identity, given that processing certain documents, the INE for example, requires a minimum period of residence and providing witnesses, who are relatives most of the times. Given the lack of institutional flexibility for the documentation, not having family support can become another disadvantage.

The importance of the networks can be found in the cases of Salvador and Gonzalo. In the first case, Salvador found it easy to obtain his documents thanks to his mother, who had returned before him. She had already inquired all the steps and requisites needed in her hometown, Veracruz. In the second case, Gonzalo, born in Tijuana, migrated at 8 years old and deported at 55, had his wife's support. She resided in San Diego, California, and traveled constantly in order to support him and to testify so he could obtain his INE. Regarding witnesses, as well as time of residence, there are concepts of community citizenship which are worth analyzing. Having a witness implies the establishment of trust links in specific communities to get someone to testify to someone's identity. Time of residence implies domiciled citizenship, which is verified with a domiciled public services receipt (electricity, telephone, etcetera).

Nevertheless, as shown by Del Real (2019), family ties are susceptible to stigma due to the discourse on criminalization of immigrants and deportation by their relatives, therefore trust and community compromise can weaken. Soledad's case shows a complex and hampered process, first in the documentation and then in the social integration in Tijuana.

Soledad crossed the USA border at 3 with her parents and was deported in 2010 at 24 years old. After that, she had several difficulties to access official documentation in Mexico due to the expiration of her birth certificate, and not having certificate of studies, requiring her to turn to her distant relatives for testification. Soledad described her relatives' refusal to act as witnesses because they considered her as a failure, or because their suspicion that she had done something wrong in the United States. The only identification she obtained was the temporary ID given by the Mexican Post Office, however, she was not able to obtain the INE. For this reason, she spent two years working as a vendor in a street market in the city until her parents acted as witnesses, after arriving in Tijuana following their deportation from the United States.

This case makes it clear that having family networks is not enough and proves that these networks have to be solid and based on principles of trust and commitment. The suspicion about her identity and her family's refusal to give evidence of it can be linked to the stigma of failure or bad behavior that hangs over the repatriates (Albicker y Velasco, 2016).

The documentation can be analyzed as a state control mechanism, but at the same time it provides access to the rights and benefits that define citizenship as a state-managed process (Torpey, 1998), rooted in community relations. The experience of deported migrants shows a zigzagging trajectory in this process of documentation and construction of the legal identity when going back to Mexico.

#### *Religious and civil society organizations*

Tijuana has an extensive hospitality infrastructure for migrants, deportees, asylum seekers and homeless people. Such infrastructure has been transformed simultaneously with the changes in migratory flows and border fluidity. The services and support they offer are accommodation, food and some related to legal advice and job placement. Its religious affiliation is diverse: Catholic, Protestant and more recently, secular. In 2019, 30 shelters managed by religious and civil society organizations were registered, and for the first time a Mexican government shelter for the caravans of Central Americans that arrived in the city between 2018 and 2019 (Coubès, Velasco, & Contreras, 2020).

Some cases exemplify the role of religious and secular organizations in processing their identity documents in the city. On the one hand, there is the case of Gustavo, deported in 2017, who worked as a security guard in a company in the city of Tijuana. He participated in the training project of the organization *Espacio Migrante*, where he received support to process his birth certificate and INE. On the other hand, Rafael managed to obtain his documents to work at a call center through the community soup kitchen *Padre Chava*, as described by Pedro. Some shelters have agreements with call centers or maquiladoras to train and incorporate people who meet certain requirements, such as proficiency in English.

The role of hospitality agents has two somewhat contradictory lines of analysis. The first is that these organizations are key to governance processes, since they function as agents of access to citizenship rights at different levels, local and national. The second one is that by virtue of Marshall's point (1950), welfare separates citizens from noncitizens through stigma, placing the deportee not as a repatriate, but as an outcast, metaphorically speaking. Public welfare separates the community of the citizens from the outcasts of society (Marshall, 1950), in such a way that civil society organizations are also classifying devices, directly or indirectly, as well as actors within the State system. Both analytical lines can be understood within the broad framework of the legitimacy of the authority of the State in daily practices of government agencies, labor market and agents of civil society, as pointed out by Sharma and Gupta (2006).

### *Living without documents in Mexico*

The repatriates who did not have their documents at the time of the interview had an average repatriation time of four years. In general, these people had migrated to the United States at an older age, and some of them had acquired an addiction during their residence in that country. Something common among these cases is that no accumulation of human or social capital was observed throughout their migratory path until their return, but rather they seemed to experience a deterioration of their capitals, such as health. The reasons why they did not have documents were that they had lost them in the middle of an itinerant life since their arrival in Mexico, or because they did not have a birth certificate as they had been registered in another state of the Mexican Republic, which prevented them from obtaining any possible documentation (Table 1).

Each of these reasons obeys precarious and mobile living conditions, marked by ignorance of state procedures. Alba, an activist who supports deportees to obtain their identity documentation through her organization, states that the main difficulties for a person to achieve this requirement, even with her help, are: that their birth certificate is not discharged; that it has an error and that the only option is to go to the state of origin to correct it; that they lose their deportation or voluntary departure letter (since many throw it away or lose it); that they do not have proof of address and/or witnesses; and that they do not have timely information.

Among the people interviewed with long stays in the United States, with or without documents, there is a lack of knowledge of the support programs for processing their documentation. In 2017, the Mexican government launched the plan called Get your birth certificate online, in which anyone could obtain their CURP<sup>9</sup> and their birth certificate. However, the plan was not relevant for the deportees since it requires having a Mexican credit card to make the payment online. In addition, it presented difficulties for those who

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<sup>9</sup> Some of the respondents are not aware of what Unique Population Registry Key (CURP) is.

are not proficient in the use of electronic systems and media, which usually occurs in older deportees.

Added to the above mentioned, there is the discretion of the counter officials, who in some cases makes the processes easy, while in others makes them difficult, as well as the lack of institutional coordination throughout the country in the field of documentation of mobile populations due to the regional inequalities that have been created in the attempts to establish federalism in Mexico (Ortega, 2013).

The role of the street-level bureaucracy becomes evident in these processes by limiting access to the basic right of identity. Once again, the relationship with the State is established in daily interaction with local officials, public servants, who are called for greater efficiency and sensitivity, whose role has an impact on the lives of individuals. The challenge of re-citizenship is well framed by Glenn (2000), who points out the urgency of fluently installing in states bureaucracies the *de facto* recognition of citizenship rights in relation to a specific State and the human rights established by international conventions.

#### *Absence of social networks*

José's case shows the bureaucratic maze that must be overcome to obtain the documents for repatriation to Mexico in the case of individuals with no solid support networks in their city or country. José migrated to California as a child from the state of Durango, Mexico. He was deported in 2017, at that time his birth certificate was not registered in the electronic system of the Civil Registration of the city of Durango. Since he did not have anyone in that state who could support him, he had to resort to Alba, who explains:

[...] they told us that it did not appear, so they gave us a certificate of non-existence in Durango, Durango. With the support of the Baja California State Human Rights Commission, we began the process to obtain the birth certificate from the Civil Registration, but they asked for documents such as baptism certificate, birth certificates of his children, academic documents. But José did not go to school, he did not have contact with his relatives in the United States (they do not answer him and do not want to know about him), and he did not have any Mexican document, because he emigrated when he was very little. We had to begin a process for a certificate of non-existence also in Baja California, a long process in which it is verified in each municipality that such certificate does not exist. When they finally granted it, we went back to the Civil Registration and were requested additional documents, which he does not have (it seemed that we were where we started after months of waiting). José continues to be undocumented in his own country and cannot find a stable job or have benefits (Alba, in-person communication, August 15, 2017).

Activists point out that the deportee is commonly unaware of the place where the birth registration was carried out, especially when it comes to people who lived in the United States for long periods of time. All this responds to the complexity of the bureaucratic mechanisms, the disconnection and lack of synchronization between the levels and

agencies of the Mexican government, which represents an obstacle in the streamlining of administrative procedures for the access to services. Added to the lack of networks is the effect of the link between the absence of documents and the exercise of other rights, such as access to work and housing. Once again, we see how the complexity of the bureaucratic network is keeping the lives of those who, after being deported, must find ways to survive in the city. Thus, the way in which daily life is affected by means of legal processes, as suggested by Menjívar (2006), places in a liminal legality those who, even when they were born in Mexico, face long bureaucratic processes that can become endless and produce states of extreme exclusion.

#### *Absence of a fixed address*

In the case of those who do not have identity documents, besides referring to work, they point out the difficulties in achieving an autonomous and stable residence (leaving the shelters). Among the repatriates that remain at the border, there is high roaming. The absence of a fixed address becomes an obstacle in the exercise of citizenship. One of the requirements for requesting documents is to have an address that is legally registered in such documents, and although there are organizations or agencies that provide their addresses to meet this requirement, being the volume of the population without a fixed address so high in the city, the organizations' possible actions are reduced considerably.

According to the importance of domiciliation (Tilly, 1978), these findings can be understood as an element of population control, of collecting public taxes for the State and for the definition of citizenship. Those who do not have a fixed residence are excluded from this framework, but at the same time they violate this principle of fixed citizenship in residential terms. Not having a fixed address places deportees in a spiral of precariousness, since not having documents prevents them from accessing other identity documents and at the same time, not having identity documents prevents them from having an autonomous and fixed residence. In addition, it exposes them to the action of urban vigilance agents, such as the local police, who consider vagrancy an administrative offense and therefore nurture their efficiency statistics, fed by the arrests of itinerant people.

Daniel's case, born in Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, illustrates the difficulties in obtaining Mexican documents due to not having a home. At the age of 13 he migrated to the United States, he was deported in 2014, at the age of 26. In Tijuana, he had the support of his sister, but lost it as a result of drug use started in the United States. He lives in constant roaming in the city, sleeping on the street and going to the public dining rooms of civil organizations. In November 2016, he was an assistant at a piñata store in Tijuana. For Daniel, "the papers are impossible, because, for example, imagine that I have to get my birth certificate, but you need an address, and not just anyone will lend you their documents [proofs] or go with you [as a witness]" (Daniel, in-person communication, August 5, 2017).

Daniel represents the case of some repatriates who have worn out their social relationships due to drug use, such as his sister's, and who experience a process of loss of capital rather than accumulation and transfer, as in the opposite case of deportees who join call centers (Albicker & Velasco, 2016)

Roaming is linked to precariousness. Documentation procedures have a cost that not everyone can pay, and for those who do not have a home, after being homeless they might perceive that their life has not changed, even if they have a birth certificate. The life of repatriates living on the street takes place in a continuous and progressive deterioration of their conditions, exacerbating the precariousness with which they have returned, deepening it through the mechanisms that exclude and limit them. The hypothesis of the chaining and accumulation of precariousness is completed with the idea of the fragility of the apparent documented life.

The loss of documents offers a window to analyze the violent edge of roaming as a returnee. Porfirio's case shows the situation of a sector of deportees who repeatedly lose their identity documents after the continuous disputes of life on the street and in shelters. After living in the United States for 12 years, working in agriculture and as a cargo transport driver, he was arrested for transporting drugs and sent to jail. He was eventually deported at Tijuana border crossing.

Porfirio says that after his deportation he managed to get his documents because he had a copy of his birth certificate, which he had to update in order to get his INE in Tijuana. But in his continuous mobility in the city, between the shelters and the street, his belongings were stolen, including his documents: "I had my ID [INE], they gave me a *putiza* [beating] and they took it from me. I got it stolen in the [northern] zone. The thugs, they took my money, papers, everything. They left me with nothing. About [...] a year ago, and from then I got another ID" (Porfirio, in-person communication, February 19, 2017). Porfirio obtained his ID again but lost it once more in another situation of street violence. This case shows us that having documents is not a stable condition, in which a set of factors and agents that are concatenated participate to deepen the fragility and precariousness of the repatriates in this condition.

#### *Documentation and national feeling*

Among those interviewed with no Mexican documents, there seems to be an awareness of the importance of having them as a fundamental aspect in their reintegration process in Mexico. Their recognition as Mexicans makes them feel that even without documents, they are right-holders. Not only does having documents have a functional dimension, but also a subjective one. That of recognition and belonging, which can vary according to the age at which they arrived in the United States (Sarabia, 2017). That is, for those who migrated younger, the perception of having or not having Mexican documents is disassociated from the idea of belonging, in any case there is a recognition of their origin, but also the permanent internal conundrum: "where am I from?", given that their first

years of life until adolescence were lived without legal recognition by the State. Apparently, these people experience the dislocation between their national identity and their state identity, as proposed by Sarabia (2017).

Meanwhile, for those who migrated at an older age, despite the desire to return to the United States in most cases, the awareness of being Mexican is present, which seems unequivocal by granting them the certainty of their identity, and therefore, of the natural right to possess their documents.

The design of bureaucratic and administrative processes, added to each individual's conditions, are mechanisms that generate exclusion and inequalities among deportees who cross the border on their return to Mexico. By being excluded from citizenship, individuals are less deserving of state protection and have limited access to social benefits. Therefore, one must learn to live like this; without national identity documents and creating strategies to survive as an undocumented Mexican.

## FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The process of re-citizenship of deportees seems to be limited to a welfare vision that has a zero point in the recovery of identity documents as a political member of the national community. The authority of the State finds an echo in different local economic and social agents that adapt to the new configurations of the workforce associated with deportations. Sharma and Gupta's thesis (2006) on the legitimization of the authority of the State in bureaucratic procedures, with the support of different economic and social agents, is supported by the vision of a documented citizenship, which is increasingly important in the scenario of the continental mobilities and the role of national borders in their containment.

There seems to be a tension between the human rights discourses with which the Mexican government agencies construct their repatriation narrative and the procedural bureaucracy for the repatriates' documentation and social integration in Mexico. The processes are in opposition between the levels of government, and thus also between the supranational and subnational agencies that are concerned with or seek to address this issue.

There are different conditions and paths for redocumentation that lead to differentiated vital conditions for the deportees, with consequences for the exercise of citizenship: life with documents and life without documents. These are not necessarily unconnected states, but due to the zigzagging nature of the process, it is possible to move between one and the other.

On the road to recovering identity documents, the role of employers and civil society organizations in Tijuana is relevant since they play a role in the selectivity of deportees to start their process of reintegration to the workforce. In that process of selectivity, it seems that those least qualified in terms of social and human capital –for example, users of psychoactive substances– are the most marginalized or excluded from the possibility

of social integration and for whom the documentation seems to be useless. It can be said that, from the notion of formal citizenship, they are citizens of the Mexican State, but without the means to verify it. And although from the viewpoint of substantive citizenships such as those discussed by Soysal (1994) and Bosniak (2008), even when being undocumented, individuals find ways of belonging and resisting. The truth is that by not having the requirements established by the State to legitimize their citizenship, the only thing left is to be recipients of welfare, which deepens their exclusion. At the same time, they are dominated by power structures for which their capital is insufficient.

Tijuana is a border city, with mobile or transit residents arriving and staying in the city with an uncertain time horizon. In this context, deportees are a specific population facing residency with a potential disadvantage of redocumentation. If identity papers and transit permits (passports, visas) are important anywhere in Mexican territory, it is at the borders. Thus, rethinking the meaning of domiciliation as a basis for exercising citizenship becomes urgent, insofar as it undermines the very social dynamics of border life and the exercise of the rights of its residents.

The concept of citizenship is spatially fixed, which starts from the vision of the domiciled citizen (Tilly, 1978), identifies homeless, mobile or itinerant subjects as suspects, objects of persecution and criminalization, and weakens the exercise of citizenship. This conception of citizenship is in contradiction with the characteristics and conditions of the return of those expelled from the United States, those who built their lives there, where, even without full citizenship, they prefer to live for different reasons, economic and subjective. This makes their integration process even more difficult due to the permanent idea of returning to what they consider to be their true country.

The above-mentioned raises another aspect that results from this research. There seems to be a tension between willing and unwilling returnees, built by the classification and differentiation that the Mexican State carries out in its bureaucratic procedures. Being “successful” or “unsuccessful” returnees in the context of the massive deportations of the last two decades, the symbolic weight of failure seems to homogenize the repatriation process. It remains to study the narratives about deportation from the media and government officials (Miller, 2012), since these discourses seep into the bureaucratic apparatus of repatriation and build a social stratum of expelled poor people and criminalized unwelcome subjects to their communities of origin.

Translation: Luis Cejudo-Espinosa

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