

Deportation Insanity

“Deportations and the ensuing labor shortages would dramatically raise the cost of produce that requires heavy manual labor, especially fruit like strawberries and blueberries, or anything that must be handpicked.”

Willy C. Shih and Veronica Chua: “Trump’s trade and deportation plans could be disastrous for the U.S. food supply” Harvard Business Review, January 2025

You know the definition of insanity, right? Doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different outcome.

By this definition, MAGA support for Trump’s campaign of mass deportation is a reflection of mass insanity.

Between 1929 and 1936, the “Mexican Repatriation” deported nearly two million people of Mexican descent, half of whom were U.S. citizens, with a profoundly negative impact on the farming and mining industries while creating no new jobs for white Americans and exacerbating the economic pain of the Great Depression.

In 1954, “Operation Wetback” deported more than one million people to Mexico, including U.S. citizens of Mexican descent. The severe shortage it caused among farmworkers led to creation of the Bracero guest worker program to bring many of them back.

In 1965, to compensate for the end of the Bracero program, the USDA launched the “High School Farm Labor” program. It was a disaster; enrollment was low, attrition was nearly 100%, and high school students who did participate came nowhere close to matching the productivity of deported farmworkers.

Between 1996 and 2000, the “Welfare-to-Farmwork” campaign spectacularly failed with most participants lasting only a few days in the fields before walking away, and farm operators experiencing significant losses.

Mass deportation has always caused far more harm than benefit and under Trump’s regime history is already beginning to repeat itself.

You’ve also heard that those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it. Perhaps we can excuse Trump’s obsession with mass deportation on the dementia that causes him to forget the past, that is assuming he ever learned from it in the first place.



The harvest that never was