ABSTRACT

TITLE:	Returning to Aztlan: Immigrants Forging New Lives in Familiar Places
AUTHOR(S):	Barbour, Brandon
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ABSTRACT: The socio-economic conditions in Latin America are a driving force of emigration from Latin America to the US for those in search of wage earning opportunities. I explored this recent demographic pattern by working with Compaeros: Four Corners Immigrant Resource Center in Durango, CO. After making inferences from data in the form of W-2 income statements, I have found numerous instances of working age males, of Latin American origin, sojourning in the United States. I suggest that the word "sojourn" more accurately portrays their lived experience because it implies a temporary stay, and a majority of clients have expressed desires to return to their country of origin after sending remittances (money) to their dependents. The principle reason, as I have found, as to why workers embark on this path and sojourn is because there are no economic opportunities to provide for their families in their countries of origin. I propose this is due to years of neoliberal trade policies that have adversely affected Latin American economies. Through review of the current literature, I explain how the formation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a cornerstone neoliberal trade policy, resulted in 2.3 million newly unemployed working class Mexicans from the agricultural sector alone. This case study provides examples of how trade policies imposed by the US and other international bodies onto Latin American countries have not yielded their promised fruits. Instead, the implemented agreements have caused economies in Latin America to contract and lose purchasing power and at the same time exaggerate disparities in wealth.