

The Link between Our Countries, Our People

*El eslabón de nuestros
países, nuestra gente*

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Abstract:

United States and Mexico are two nations with a shared history and a future. To the author, the celebration of the bicentennial of diplomatic relations between our countries serves as a great opportunity for us, as two sister nations, to recognize the path we have traveled. Though our shared history has been laced with moments of pain, we can celebrate our great peoples and continue building a prosperous, safe, and sustainable future for our nations.

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Resumen:

México y Estados Unidos son dos naciones que comparten historia y futuro. Para el autor, la celebración del bicentenario de las relaciones diplomáticas entre nuestros países representa una gran oportunidad para que, como dos naciones hermanas, reconozcamos el camino que hemos recorrido aún con sus momentos históricos de dolor para celebrar la grandeza de nuestros pueblos y seguir construyendo un futuro próspero, seguro y sostenible para nuestra gente.

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Key Words:

Mexico, United States, bicentennial of diplomatic relations, Joseph Biden, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

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Palabras clave:

México, Estados Unidos, bicentenario de relaciones diplomáticas, Joseph Biden, Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

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Introduction

Our countries established diplomatic relations 200 years ago, but our nations have been united for much longer. Our people represent our deepest bond. Our strong and lasting ties have helped us reach this historic moment of our integration and give us great optimism for our shared future.

In their July 12, 2022 Joint Statement, President Biden and President López Obrador created a path to address our challenges and transform them into shared opportunities, reaffirming our cooperation for the benefit of our peoples, since “as neighbors, friends and family, we are two nations united by a common future”.¹

The United States and Mexico share a history of more than 400 years. Every day, our peoples live the bonds that unite our nations. Whether in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in my home state of Colorado, in the origins of St. Augustine in Florida, and especially through our people, we are united now and forever.

The Camino Real de Tierra Adentro, managed by the U.S. National Park Service epitomizes our enduring ties. The almost 2600-kilometer route

¹ The White House, “President Biden and President Lopez Obrador Joint Statement”, July 12, 2022, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/07/12/president-biden-and-president-lopez-obrador-joint-statement/> (date consulted: October 13, 2022).

affirms the passage of history through our nations, from our Indigenous peoples to our colonial heritage and in the historical settlements of what are now Mexico and the United States.

This route of cultural and economic exchange also shows that human ties have united us for hundreds of years, since “it is a path in which the history and shared heritage of Spain, Mexico, and the southwestern United States stand out. The origins of the trail date back to the 16th century and predate the settlement of Jamestown as much as Plymouth Rock”.²

We are two nations with a shared history and a future. The celebration of the Bicentennial of diplomatic relations between our countries serves as a great opportunity for us, as two sister nations, to recognize the path we have traveled. Though our shared history has been laced with moments of pain, we can celebrate our great peoples and continue building a prosperous, safe, and sustainable future for our nations.

Our strongest roots

Our people represent the strongest link in our integration. The more than 460 million people in the United States³ and Mexico⁴ give us hope. Their enormous potential is magnified when we unite our talent, capacity, and innovation. Therefore, our people are the reason we celebrate 200 years of diplomatic relations between the United States and Mexico.

More than 40 million people in the United States can trace their roots to Mexico. As President Biden has emphasized, “those ties are further

² “El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro. Historia y significado”, in National Park Service, February 14, 2022, at <https://www.nps.gov/es-es/elca/learn/historia-y-significado.htm> (date consulted: October 13, 2022).

³ Brynn Epstein and Daphne Lofquist, “U.S. Census Bureau Today Delivers State Population Totals for Congressional Apportionment”, in U.S. Census Bureau, April 26, 2021, at <https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2021/04/2020-census-data-release.html> (date consulted: September 30, 2022).

⁴ National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI), “Estadísticas a propósito del Día Mundial de la Población”, press release no. 358/22, July 7, 2022, at https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/saladeprensa/aproposito/2022/EAP_Poblac22.pdf (date consulted: September 30, 2022).

strengthened by our shared history and heritage: the culture, pride, and countless contributions of Mexican Americans, and the heritage and culture of an essential part of American culture”.⁵

As our relationship has deepened and transformed, so has the recognition of the important role that Mexican Americans play in U.S. society.

In the United States today, the millions of children who speak Spanish as well as English represent a cultural strength. We also understand that their ability to speak both languages equips young people with an important tool to thrive in a globalized world and strengthen our regional competitiveness.

With this binational perspective, we understand each other better and have a broader perspective in how we perceive ourselves. We get to know each other in a more profound way and discover how our kinship benefits the peoples of both countries.

That is why, either as the Attorney General of Colorado, United States Senator, Secretary of the Interior in the Obama-Biden Administration, and now as Ambassador to Mexico, I have encouraged that the dignity of all human beings be respected. It is part of the great diversity of the United States—a diversity that enriches us and makes us stronger as a nation.

The pride of our Mexican and American roots allows us to see reality from a binational perspective and make a greater commitment to our diversity, while working for the good of all Americans. We are a nation of immigrants. We therefore have a complex history in which it is important to remember that a strong America is an inclusive America.

One in five Americans identifies as Latino. President Biden recognizes the importance of the legacy of Latinos in the United States. We see its influence every day: in “every aspect of our national life: on our television and movie screens, in the music that makes us dance and in the foods we enjoy”.⁶

⁵ The White House, “Remarks By President Biden and First Lady Jill Biden at a Cinco De Mayo Reception”, May 5, 2022, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/05/05/remarks-by-president-biden-and-first-lady-jill-biden-at-a-cinco-de-mayo-reception/> (date consulted: October 1, 2022).

⁶ The White House, “A Proclamation on National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2021”, September 14, 2022, at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/09/14/a-proclamation-on-national-hispanic-heritage-month-2021/> (date consulted: October 1, 2022).

The history of Latinos in the United States needs to be told and more widely known. Their contributions in all areas should be made visible. When the stories of millions of Mexican Americans are shared, more families will have greater opportunities and better lives.

To that end, in the United States we have worked to highlight the endless contributions of the Mexican American community to our society. Two personal examples of those contributions illustrate our great shared history. I can see them through my father, who joined the United States Army to defend democratic values during World War II. And I see them through my mother, who traveled by train from a small Colorado ranch to Washington, D.C. to work at the Pentagon.

Our two countries fought together against the tyranny of the Nazi regime—and so did large numbers of Mexican Americans. They stood up for our shared values at a defining moment in world history, helping lay the foundation for the future of our bilateral cooperation.

During the Obama-Biden Administration, we launched the American Latino Heritage Initiative to help us recognize these and other contributions made by Latinos to the history and development of the United States. We discovered that less than one percent of recognized national historic sites highlighted Latinos' contributions to the United States' rich and diverse history.

One figure who has a special place in these recognitions is César Chávez, a social leader who worked to promote human rights, particularly of farm workers. Another is Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers (UFW). Dolores, along with her seven children, joined César and his family in Delano, California. There they formed the National Farm Workers Association, or NFWA, the predecessor to the UFW.⁷

Along with other senators, such as then-senators Barack Obama and Joe Biden, we worked for the rights of immigrants and for a path that would allow millions of dreamers to fulfill their dreams and find legal services that connect employers with job seekers.

The legacy of César Chávez has great significance. He was a pillar of the Chicano movement, which focused on the defense of human rights, while

⁷ “Biografía de Dolores Huerta,” in United Farm Workers, March 7, 2017, at <https://ufw.org/es/biografia-de-dolores-huerta/> (date consulted: October 11, 2022).

forging a unique identity as part of Mexican American society. It is a legacy with which other people of Latino heritage in the United States also identify.⁸

The Chicano movement was transcendent especially in art and culture, with works like those of Malaquías Montoya, who through his art seeks to capture the social struggles that this movement represents and give a voice to those who do not have it.

The public and private sectors, as well as civil society have promoted projects such as the Latino-American Heritage Fund or the Smithsonian Museum of the American Latino in Washington, D.C., because it is also important to share the contemporary histories of Latinos and Mexican Americans so that all American society knows and appreciates the contributions of the Latino community.

In this sense, in the Department of the Interior, we promoted the recognition of the Missions in San Antonio, Texas, as cultural heritage of humanity. It is a heritage that is part of our rich and deep shared history, because there you can see the ties between our countries, as well as different milestones of our common past.

The bicentennial celebration represents a unique opportunity to shape the way we perceive each other, establish lasting frameworks, and work on our shared future while protecting our people, democracies, and economies.

At this historic moment in our bilateral relationship, the Embassy of the United States in Mexico seeks to deepen the ties between our peoples through educational exchanges, so that more Mexicans study in the United States and Americans in Mexico.

In doing so, we will take advantage of our unique bond so that young people in both countries can build their future and that of our region. Through educational exchanges, we will deepen the personal ties and mutual understanding that strengthen our relationship.

Thanks to our integration, we have opportunities that seemed impossible: our bilateral trade reaches almost two billion dollars a day; our governments are aligned to invest in our shared border to make it modern,

⁸ "The Chicano Civil Rights Movement," in Library of Congress, at <https://www.loc.gov/item/ibas.200197398> (date consulted: October 11, 2022).

secure, and efficient; we work together for our shared security and prosperity through cooperative mechanisms; and together we drive the transition toward new technologies and clean energy.

Our people are at the center of our actions and are our main strength. The 200 years of the United States-Mexico diplomatic relationship is a celebration of the peoples and the recognition that the greatness of our peoples strengthen the deep ties that unite us.

Celebrating Our History and Building the Future

In the United States and Mexico, whether from the government, academia or civil society, there are efforts that seek to promote mutual understanding and reshape the way they are perceived. We want to recognize the contributions of both Mexican Americans in Mexico and the United States, as well as the contributions of Americans in Mexican society, whether it is the more than a million and a half Americans who call Mexico home or the more than 25 million tourists from the United States who visit this country every year.

The celebration of 200 years of formal relations between our countries gives us the opportunity to recognize the greatness of our people and to highlight the benefits that have arisen for both nations thanks to our peoples.

The bicentennial allows us to see our shared future with greater hope, given that we find ourselves in a transformative moment in our relationship promoted by our governments. We have come a long way. Fifty years ago, hardly anyone would have thought that by 2022 our economies would be so integrated that parts of a vehicle would cross North American borders multiple times during the manufacturing process.

In fact, we do not have to go that far in our shared history because just 20 years ago, the reality was different. Therefore, one of the questions that we must also ask ourselves in the current context is where we want to take the future of our integration in the next two decades, a time in which our people will continue to join us and build our future.

Today, our countries are moving toward the industries of the future through electromobility that is seen in Mexico through U.S. investments

in the manufacture of electric vehicles or in the generation of clean energy at La Toba Energy Center in Baja California Sur. We work together to face our shared challenges, such as the security of our towns and irregular migration. The ties that unite our peoples ensure that we achieve a positive resolution of the challenges we face.

Our countries have the potential to consolidate North America as a democratic, economic, and clean energy powerhouse. I am sure that it is possible to achieve it since our main strength lies in our people and in their greatness. Although our countries have the capacity to lead this transformation, the capacity and talent of our people will be crucial to achieve it.

Conclusion

Without a doubt, the strongest and deepest roots that unite our nations are found in our people, who represent the main reason to trust that together we can build a prosperous, secure, and sustainable future for our respective peoples on both sides of the border.

Celebrating 200 years of diplomatic relations between our countries gives us more reasons to honor our people and continue to work together to get to know each other better, to broaden the way our peoples see each other, and to work on our shared prosperity and security for the benefit of our people.