

Student's Name

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Course

Date

Experiences during the Great Depression and the New Deal

The Great Depression and the New Deal provided different challenges to ethnic Mexicans, U.S. farms, and farm workers. The Great Depression lasted from 1929 to 1939 and it was characterized by an economic downturn among industrialized nations. To restore prosperity in the United States of America, President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the New Deal.

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The New Deal involved a series of projects and programs to provide jobs and relief for the vulnerable individuals and stabilize the economy of the country. In addition to the employment crisis, food shortages, and the job crisis experienced during the Great Depression, ethnic Latinos faced additional challenges. However, their condition and that of U.S. farms and farm workers changed during the New Deal both in the country and across the region. Mexican immigrants faced various unpleasant experiences during the Great Depression. The rise of unemployment in the United States during the Great Depression also led to increased hostility towards “immigrants.”

The government started a program to repatriate immigrants including ethnic Mexicans back to Mexico. Even though some of the immigrants resettled on their own free will, there are others, in particular ethnic Mexican farm workers who were deported against their will. A

majority of ethnic Mexicans that remained in the United States during the Great Depression were farm workers. The closure of banks led small farmers to abandon their farms and large farmers to reduce the number of their permanent workers (Acuna 11). This affected Mexican farmworkers as they were forced to travel across the country in search of other opportunities. During this time, ethnic Mexicans only managed to find temporary stability in the various migrant work camps set by the government.

When Franklin D. Roosevelt became President of the United States, over one third of farmers in the country had lost their land and revenue while Mexican farm workers were struggling for survival. Due to loss of job opportunities on the farms, many Americans moved to cities despite the country's economy still being dependent on agriculture. Therefore, the programs and projects during the New Deal were faced with changing conditions of the U.S. farms and farm workers. The policies passed during the New Deal aimed at making the way of life of farm workers viable by tackling the rising prices and overproduction (Acuna 20). The government raised the prices of farms through giving farmers money to reduce production as well as introducing effective methods of planting.

The New Deal also enhanced the quality of life for Americans living in farmlands and rural areas. New credit lines for distressed farmers were created to save them from losing their lands and crops. Tenant farmers were also able to access secure credits that enabled them to purchase land (Acuna 60). The government constructed bridges and roads to help farmers transport their produce to the market and gain access to hospitals and other facilities. Dams were also constructed to control floods, irrigate crops and generate electricity for use on the U.S. farms. This helped farm families to change from using oil lamps and stove to electric fireplaces and lights.

Other regions reacted differently in trying to solve the plight of their farms and farm workers. During this time, labor rights movements succeeded in fighting for better pay, for

workers and better living conditions. The success of the unions made farmers and other unskilled laborers come together and fight for their rights collectively. Lastly, other farm workers opted to move to cities to look for other means of employment thus abandoning farming altogether.

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Acuna, Rodolfo F. *Occupied America: A History of Chicanos*. Pearson, 2019.