

Toil and Temptation

Michael Kamber

Points of Access

1. What is your initial reaction when you hear the phrase “illegal immigrant”? What attitudes toward illegal immigration are you aware of? From the news? From people you know? How do you feel about it?
 2. What type of work would you be willing to do for \$3.75 an hour? What types of jobs would you be unwilling to do? If you were in a foreign country would your opinion be different?
 3. How would you describe this country to someone who wanted to move here for a “better life”?
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For seven days after his arrival from Mexico in mid-January, Antonio Gonzalez spent his time alone in the apartment, watching Spanish-language soaps and game shows, occasionally looking out the window at the snowy Bronx streets or gazing at the 6 train as it clattered by on the el. Two years earlier, his older brother, Juan Carlos, had learned the neighborhood by each day venturing a block farther from the apartment, then returning home. When he had mastered the surrounding streets, he traveled a stop on the subway—then two, then three. But Antonio saw the police cars passing by on the streets, and fearing deportation, he stayed inside. On the eighth day, the skies cleared, and he went to work at the car wash with his brother.

Antonio and Juan Carlos left before dawn, walking north along Westchester Avenue, past the candy store, restaurant, pizza parlor, real estate office, and bodega, each business owned by immigrants: Indians, Dominicans, Italians, Guyanese, and Puerto Ricans, respectively. Antonio smiled as he passed the pizza parlor. A 15-year-old acquaintance from Zapotitlán, Antonio’s village of 4500 in southern Mexico, had vanished a year earlier, and a few nights ago Antonio had gone to buy a slice and found the young man there, sweeping bits of crusts and garlic salt from the floor.

At Westchester Square, the two brothers caught the X31 bus along Tremont and Williamsbridge Avenues to Eastchester, a north Bronx neighborhood remarkable for its

dreary nondescriptness: block upon block of squat one-story brick buildings, stores selling auto parts and laminated furniture, a KFC, a Dunkin Donuts, some gas stations.

At the car wash, no one tells Antonio how much he is being paid, and he does not ask. In lieu of training, he is handed a towel and told to join a dozen others—all compact, brown-skinned men like himself—who stand in the mist at the foot of the wash tunnel, eyes sandy from sleep, waiting for the cars to roll out. The men regard him coolly, saying nothing, but shout to one another in Spanish over the roar of the machinery—the blowers, spray jets, and huge flopping strands of soapy cloth that make sucking noises as they slap against the cars.

At 7 a.m., a sedan rolls out of the tunnel, and six men swarm the vehicle, quickly burnishing the exterior and wiping clean the windows from the inside. Thirty seconds later another vehicle is spit out, and Antonio joins the second group, trying to walk alongside the still-rolling car as the others do, wiping as they move.

The former slaughterhouse worker left school at 13. He has been a laborer for five years, frequently averaging 70 or more hours a week at jobs in Mexico. He has assumed that rubbing a car dry will be easy work, easy money. He is wrong. The teenager stoops, bends, and reaches for the elusive water droplets; an hour later his legs and back ache, and pain rockets through his arm as he drags the waterlogged towel over the cars for the thousandth time. The areas that he wipes are still damp, and the others take up his slack and grumble about the poor job he's doing. He is nervous and afraid to disappoint his brother, who has paid \$1600 for Antonio's illegal passage to New York. He sees the boss watching him from inside the glass booth, motionless and grim-faced.

Another worker shows Antonio how to fold his towel to get better coverage, but Antonio repeatedly drops the towel as he tries to double it. Behind him, the cars are piling up in the tunnel, and he works quickly, just short of frantic. He has 11 hours and 500 cars to go. Before the day is over, he is thinking that his journey to New York is a mistake. He is thinking that he will return home soon, to Zapotitlán, his village in the state of Puebla, where the majority of New York's Mexicans come from.

If Antonio does return, he will be a man very nearly alone, in the company of young children and the elderly. Fully one third of Antonio's village—including nearly all of the working-age males and 20 percent of the women—is in New York City. Firm figures are hard to come by for a community that is largely illegal, but in the last decade, New York City's Mexican population has grown between 300 and 600 percent—depending on which experts are consulted—to a total of at least 300,000. Dr. Robert Smith, a Barnard College expert on Mexican immigration, calls the growth

“astounding—the fastest of any group in the city.” (So many Mexicans have left Puebla that they are called the Puebla York, in much the same way that New York City’s Puerto Ricans are referred to as Nuyoricans, and Manhattan-based channel 47 hosts *Hechos Puebla*, a weekly show on Puebla current events.)

Like Antonio, nearly all the newly arrived Mexicans have traded one life of labor and poverty for another. They are young men and women who, in their homeland, have run up against the walls created by class, lack of education, and the detritus of 70-plus years of one-party rule. In Mexico, there is no future; in New York, there might be.

The residents of Zapotitlán began arriving in New York 18 years ago. A two-month investigation into the community reveals a clear majority who have fallen into a semi-permanent underclass: men and women here illegally, who trade 70-hour workweeks for a handful of cash. A small but growing number of young men have drifted into drugs and gangs. But many others—maybe one in five—have found some degree of prosperity in New York, settling into comfortable middle-class lives and easing ties to their homeland. Still others have created a dual existence, maintaining families and even businesses in Zapotitlán. They fly home a few times a year, then travel back like thieves in the night, slipping past the Border Patrol, into the Arizona desert. Of New York City’s Mexican population as a whole, 75 percent are not upwardly mobile, as many as nine in 10 are “illegal,” and fully half the teens are not in school.

April 15 is opening day for the Liga Mexicana de Beisból, made up of 16 teams, each representing a town in Puebla. (The baseball-crazy city of Tulcingo is fielding four separate teams.) Zapotitlán’s team is making its league debut; they have new white uniforms, ordered from Mexico, bearing a cactus logo and the words *Club Zapotitlán*. On Sunday morning the players gather early at City Island and win an error-filled first game, 8-4, using a pitcher who was chased through the Arizona desert by the Border Patrol scant weeks ago. His 19-year-old son, also here illegally, works in a Dominican bodega on Tremont Avenue; the pitcher has come to help make money to pay for the son’s house, under construction in Zapotitlán. He has come, he says, because he wants his son home soon, “before he becomes Americanized.”

In years past, Zapotitlán’s players were dispersed throughout other clubs in the league, yet a hundred or more Zapotecos would show up for a game if they heard a few of their *paisanos* were playing. “We love baseball,” explains Angel Flores, one of Club Zapotitlán’s founders. “But really we put the team together because the people from Zapotitlán need a place to gather.” Hundreds of people from the village are expected to show up for games this year, which will be followed by barbecues and socializing.

Angel has spent 12 and a half of the last 13 years in New York working as a laborer. For several years, he has worked as a painter for an Irish contractor in Yonkers. He has watched as the man has gone from a rented house and car to an ornate home, three rental properties, and three new cars. "There is a network," Angel explains. "My boss gets all his contracts from other Irishmen."

Yet Angel is not envious of the Irishman's success; Angel makes \$130 a day, tax free, a princely sum by the standards of illegal Mexicans in New York. And he has his own network; he has managed to stack the work crew with five others from Zapotitlán—including the pitcher, who is his cousin. Angel's father was a miner in Mexico, and he brags softly about his siblings there: a nurse, a lawyer, an engineer. He is not envious of them, either; he put each through college with money he earned in New York. He is an uneducated laborer, they are professionals, yet he has enabled their social mobility. His one complaint about New York? "The people from Zapotitlán, I don't see some of them for years," he says. From the Bronx, they are slowly dispersing into Queens and Brooklyn, like water seeping into the earth after the rains.

Luis Garcia, the first resident of Zapotitlán to arrive in New York, in 1983, settled near Willis Avenue, in the Bronx, down the block from where the 6 train stops under the 40th Precinct. Within a few years, dozens of friends and relatives were arriving with little more than his phone number, and they slept on his couch or on mattresses lined up on the floor. Gradually the community grew and relocated; some went out to Queens, a few moved south to the burgeoning Mexican community in Sunset Park, Brooklyn. Most, however, stayed near the 6 train, following the el north along Westchester Avenue to Soundview and Castle Hill in the Bronx. They are there today, perhaps a thousand strong; at just one building, 690 Allerton Avenue, at the corner of White Plains Road, there are an estimated 50 families from Zapotitlán. (One of the few remaining Puerto Ricans in the building says, "You're looking for Mexicans? You came to the right place, and it's getting worse!") They find each other work, baby-sit one another's children. In a strange land, they take comfort in neighbors they have known since childhood.

And sometimes, in their insular community, they find love. In 1996, Alma Rosa, a tall, graceful teenager, placed second in the local beauty pageant in San Antonio, Mexico, a nearby village that makes Zapotitlán seem like a metropolis. Alfonso, the second oldest son of a middle-class family in Zapotitlán, found her there at the pageant, and the two began to date. Yet the young girl's family strongly disapproved of Alfonso, and they sent their 19-year-old daughter away, to San Bernardino, California, where there is a small colony of townspeople. Alfonso followed and searched northern California in vain

for several weeks, eventually losing hope, assuming she would be married if he ever found her. He left for New York to seek work. The following spring, at a gathering of people from Zapotitlán, he heard two men speak of her. She too had come to New York, and he called her that evening. The couple live today in a building full of Mexicans on Dean Street, in downtown Brooklyn, with their two small children and three of Alfonso's brothers.

About one-fifth of the immigrants from Zapotitlán are women, and the percentage is growing steadily. In the Mexican community as a whole, the number of women arriving in New York is higher, probably approaching 40 percent. They are working in factories, cleaning houses, and having children. The birth rate among Mexican women rose 232 percent between 1989 and 1996; they now rank third among immigrant groups in New York City—higher than Chinese, South Asians, or Haitians. "Most of these [Mexican] women are very young, and they have a high fertility rate; it's a double whammy," says Peter Lobó of the New York City Department of Planning. "This is going to have a huge impact on New York City."

Lessons In Money and Skin Color

At the car wash, a week has passed. The pain in Antonio's body has lessened, he has learned how to handle the towel, how to flip the car doors open, wipe the seals with one quick motion, then snap the towel over his shoulder and quickly wipe the windows with a softer blue rag. His coworkers are not so intimidating now; the other Mexicans see that he will work and begin to talk and joke with him—the Salvadorans also, though they speak differently and seem harder men, having been through a war that Antonio knows nothing about. And then there are the tall, dark-skinned men, men unlike any he has seen in Mexico, who he has assumed are *morenos*, African Americans, but turn out to be Africans, and at first he is confused by the distinction ("In the dark of the tunnel, you can see just their eyes," he says with some wonderment). Because they are African, they are very proud, he is told, and dislike taking orders. With the exception of a garrulous Nigerian who has learned to speak Spanish, the Africans are given jobs where they work alone.

Spend 72 hours a week wiping other people's cars, and resentment is a constant companion. Until recently, Antonio has known only Mexicans. Lunch and downtime at the car wash are filled with talk of money and race. Eastchester is a working-to middle-class neighborhood of West Indian and African American civil servants, secretaries,

teachers, construction workers. Most work hard, many favor nice cars, and the line at the car wash is a parade of conspicuous consumption—Cadillacs, Lexuses, late-model SUVs. They come here because it is nearby, and because the “Super,” which includes hot wax, polish, and wheels Armoralled, costs \$9, a savings of \$3 over the other car wash, a half-mile down Baychester Avenue, where the white people go.

But the black people—especially the young black men—don’t appreciate paying hard-earned money to have a bunch of illegals leave drops of water on their cars. If they feel they are not getting their money’s worth, they wave their hands in the air and shout at the workers and then mock them: “No speak eengleesh.” Antonio quickly learns the phrase “Yo, yo, yo” and an utterance that sounds to him like “fock” or “focking,” which he believes to be a mean word. And noise is of particular concern. Antonio and Juan Carlos are soft-spoken and courteous. They would never raise their voices unless they were ready to fight. These black men raise their voices all the time.

The tips left by the black clientele run to silver and copper, with some dollar bills thrown in. At the end of a 12-hour shift, Antonio takes home maybe \$5 in tips. Down the hill, *los blancos* leave \$5 bills, and rumor has it the workers average \$30 a day in tips. Times six days, that’s good money. But here Antonio is stuck with the cheap *morenos* who shout at him, wear their clothes baggy, and lounge against the wall. “Where do they get their money?” he wants to know. To him, and to the other Mexicans, the young black men seem lazy and dangerous.

The first week there are days when it rains and there is no work, but soon Antonio is averaging 72 hours a week. His hourly rate remains a mystery to him. He is simply handed an envelope with \$270 in cash at week’s end, which he accepts without complaint. Juan Carlos is the senior laborer at the car wash. With a year and a half of experience, he makes \$4 an hour. The others, he believes, make \$3.75 an hour. It is straight time—nothing extra after 40 hours. A laborer working at the legal minimum wage, plus overtime, would be paid \$497. The car wash has approximately 20 employees. By using workers without green cards, the owner, a Portuguese immigrant, is saving nearly a quarter of a million dollars a year.

Twenty years ago, Mexican workers had the second-highest per capita income among Hispanics. Today they have the lowest. Their average earning power has dropped 50 percent, a result of the flood of illegal laborers like Antonio who are readily exploited by tens of thousands of small businesses throughout the city—restaurants, delis, small factories, and building contractors who rely on their sub-minimum-wage labor to turn a profit.

But to Antonio, \$300 a week is about \$270 more than most men make in Mexico, where the minimum wage is \$4 a day. After work one evening in mid-February, the two

brothers walk down to the Western Union near Castle Hill Avenue. There, they send a money order for \$300 to their mother in Mexico. It is their combined savings from three weeks of work. Theirs is a drop in the bucket: In 1996, the last year for which figures are available, \$5.6 billion was sent home by Mexicans in the U.S., making *remesas* the third largest factor in the Mexican economy.

Of Antonio's townspeople here in New York, there is a shoe-store owner in Queens who is building a gas station in the village; a busboy at a restaurant on Madison who is part-owner of construction vehicles that are rented out in Zapotitlán for \$2000 a month; a 17-year-old bodega worker on Tremont who makes \$1200 a month and sends \$1000 home to his mother—eating free food at his job and staying inside on his day off, lest he be tempted to spend money. They say that those who suffer the most in New York, live the best when they return to Mexico.

When he left Zapotitlán for New York, Antonio's stated dream was to build a kitchen for his mother. Upon receiving her son's money, she hires a local contractor to begin work on the addition, then abandons the project, to be completed another time. A few weeks later, Antonio sends more money and the mother of nine—who cannot read or write, but adds complex sums with lightning speed—buys several hundred dollars' worth of food and soda, and opens a small store in the front room of her house.

Life As An 'Illegal'

By late February, Antonio has begun to feel secure in the Bronx. There is solace in the daily routine; he is no longer afraid of the police that pass by, the dollar bills and coins are less confusing. Yet the frustration starts early each morning. At work, vacuum cleaner in hand, Antonio has learned to say, "Open the trunk." But the patrons frequently respond with a torrent of words, and he stands and listens helplessly. Buying coffee at the bodega is an ordeal; he gets nervous, procrastinates. What if the Puerto Rican woman is not working today? The other counter workers ask him questions that he does not understand. The customers stare as he grows flustered.

And Antonio begins to see the long-term limitations as well. The two brothers are living doubled-up, and being gouged on the rent, but cannot move; landlords won't rent to "illegals" with no credit history. Juan Carlos has a friend working at a midtown parking lot—a union job, \$20 an hour, and they're hiring. But between Antonio and Juan Carlos, they have only one fake green card from Texas, with someone else's name on it.

It will never do. So they stay at the car wash, surrounded by opulence and possibilities, caged by their illegal status and lack of English. A friend suggests English classes and Antonio laughs. "We leave the house before six in the morning and get home after eight at night—some nights we work until 10. When do we take the classes?" A week later he says, "We could just stay right here, buy from the Puerto Ricans, work with the Mexicans, stay right here." He means literally and figuratively, and he shakes his head. Right here is not going to be good enough.

Success Stories

For the first generation who arrived from Zapotitlán, in the 1980s, right here wasn't good enough either. Lupe Gonzalez came across in 1987, in the trunk of a car with holes cut in the floor. The coyotes gave him a straw through which he sucked fresh air as he bounced over the roads near San Diego. The 18-year-old entered the work force as a messenger in midtown Manhattan—\$100 a week plus tips. Yet the job suited him no more than the conservative lifestyle of his hometown. "I used to dress up in my sister's clothes and play with dolls when I was a child," explains Lupe. In 1991, he found a job as a hairdresser at a shop on a Bronx side street, near the Morrison Avenue stop on the 6 train. He slowly built up his clientele in the Hispanic neighborhood, and became best friends with two Puerto Rican stylists, who were also gay. "They taught me how to do my makeup, how to wear fake *tetas* and high heels. They took me to the gay clubs and balls," he says, explaining his entry into New York's gay community.

Eight years ago, he put down \$5000, bought the shop he worked in, and renamed it Versace; in February of 2001, he opened a second, larger location, Style 2000. He now has five employees. On a recent April evening, the tall hairdresser with the lipstick and long hair formed elaborate curls with a hot comb in the crowded salon, the air filled with hair spray and merengue blasting from overhead speakers. The four chairs were full, and a crowd of people—Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, one Chinese woman—waited near the door for their hair to be cut.

As an openly gay man, a successful business person, a legal resident of the U.S., and a fluent English speaker, Lupe is clearly an anomaly in the Mexican community, whose biggest holiday is December 12, the birthday of the Virgin of Guadalupe. One expects to hear painful stories of his exclusion among his fellow immigrants from Zapotitlán: There are none. "They wave at me on the street," he says. "They know that

I'm one of the 12 sons and daughters of Delfino Gonzalez, from Zapotitlán. That's all that matters."

One Saturday night in late March, Los Tigres del Norte, a hugely popular Mexican *norteño* band, comes to New York. Antonio and Juan Carlos are there, and as the band takes the stage, the audience erupts, waves of adulation washing over the musicians. They launch into a set of ballads about being from Mexico, having nothing there—no profession or future—and risking your life to cross the border illegally; about grueling workweeks and a life that is nothing more than "from home to work, from work to home." In the crowd there is a wave of emotion that Antonio has never felt before, a current very nearly electric. He is surrounded by thousands of cheering, nearly hysterical countrymen who share his life, his pain, his frustration. Grown men—macho Mexican men—are weeping all around him.

The following Saturday night, the 18-year-old's destination is the notorious Chicano Club. Three thousand miles away, in small Mexican villages, women speak of this Bronx nightspot in hushed tones. Men speak of it with smiles on their faces. They speak of the Dominican and Puerto Rican women in high heels, skin-tight pants, and halter tops. You can hold them as close as you want—at least as long as the song is playing. You're paying for it: \$2 a dance. Antonio, Juan Carlos, and two friends sit at a table, drinking rounds of Corona and watching the women in the smoke-filled room. A live band is pounding out *bachatas*, *cumbias*, and covers of hits by Los Tigres. The music and bodies and laughter begin to run together. Money that could have been saved and sent to Mexico is spent on women and beer. It is the cost of feeling alive for a night. Antonio gets home about 4 a.m., sleeps for an hour, and leaves for work, exhausted, hung over, smelling of perfume and feeling good.

Mexicans say that teenagers like Antonio lose their money and their innocence at the Chicano, but it is New York that takes these things. In Sunset Park, Brooklyn, Ignacio, a 22-year-old man from Zapotitlán, knows the Chicano well—but he cannot go there, because it is in the Bronx, and people will kill him if they find him. A strikingly handsome, muscular man, he sits in a dreary apartment, roaches blazing trails over pin-ups of naked women on the walls. He sends \$500 a month to his wife and three children in Zapotitlán. They live in a house overlooking the desert and the forests of giant saguaro cactus, in a place where, in the middle of the day, one hears total silence. His family is waiting patiently for his return. He is never going back. He cannot. He is addicted to New York.

Ignacio made his first trip to New York when he was 17. He worked delivering pizzas for an Italian place on the Grand Concourse, in the Bronx. One day the

teenager made the mistake of looking inside the pizza box. "When you come from Mexico, your eyes are closed," he says of his early days in the city. "Now my eyes are open." His is a complex story involving drug deliveries, vendettas, betrayals, attempted murders. The details do not matter. What matters is that he stands at night on Brooklyn street corners in a tight T-shirt and baggy pants. He has a gold chain, a .25 automatic, and some bags of coke. Much of the profit goes up his nose, and he works a day job washing dishes to support his habit and his children. His life in New York is a secret he keeps from his family. "They have this dream of who I am, why ruin that?" he asks. He's made a couple of trips back, gotten his wife pregnant twice more. But he could not stay around the friendly, trusting people of his hometown. "Their eyes are closed," he repeats dismissively.

Becoming a New Yorker

Living in New York is costing more than Antonio expected, much more. Rent, food, and transit take up over half of the \$1200 a month that he earns. Then there are clothes to be bought, weekly phone calls to Mexico, haircuts, nights out, Laundromats, a large fake gold watch from Canal Street: It has been more than a month since he sent money home. Juan Carlos commiserates: "I've been here two and a half years," he says. "All I have to show for it is a pizza oven in Mexico." Though he doesn't say so, he has also purchased the building materials for his family's new concrete house, and now Antonio has helped pay for the kitchen and for his mother's new store, modest though it may be. But it is true, for themselves, they have nothing. Juan Carlos's dream of the two brothers opening a *taqueria* in Mexico seems to be years away. It is mid-April, however. Spring has come to the Bronx, and Antonio does not seem as fixated on his brother's dream as he once was. A Puerto Rican girl smiles at Antonio on a subway platform, he boldly asks for her number, and they talk on the phone. And there are more nights ahead at the Chicano Club, and at the nightspots that he has discovered along Roosevelt Avenue in Queens, where he danced for several hours one night with a pretty Peruvian woman.

At the car wash, his boss has seen that Antonio is good with his hands, and is training him to compound paint, which entails running a large buffing wheel gently over the car's surface. Antonio has heard there is good money in this, that paint shops pay \$500 or more a week for a good compound man. And he has heard that the boss may open another car wash, and that Juan Carlos will be manager if he can learn English. "Really,

life in New York is pretty good,” Antonio says one night, sitting on a park bench, Juan Carlos at his side. “All you need is a little money.” Then he and his brother begin to discuss their latest plan, which is to save enough to bring their 16-year-old brother, Fernando, to the Bronx. He has already told them he wants to come.

Reading Comprehension—Points of Engagement

1. Michael Kamber’s article is entitled “Toil and Temptation.” What does “temptation” refer to? Refer to specific examples in the text. Why do you think Kamber chose that word to help him describe the lives of the people he writes about?
2. Why, according to Kamber, have “nearly all the newly arrived Mexicans traded one life of labor and poverty for another”? Discuss two reasons and refer to the places in the text that show how you know.
3. Try to predict what the future might hold for Antonio and other immigrants just arriving in this country. Where could they be in ten years? Twenty years? Use evidence from the article to support your answer.

Assignment Questions—Points of Departure

1. “Toil and Temptation” shows the economic realities of illegal immigration, for the Mexicans living in the Bronx, their employer, and the society at large—a scenario made possible by capitalism. But Kamber’s article also reveals the human and social realities that accompany this economic arrangement. Use what you see in “Toil and Temptation” to consider another text that explores the impacts of American capitalism on individuals, such as David Brooks, “Our Sprawling, Supersize Utopia,” Adam Gopnik’s “Bumping Into Mr. Ravioli,” Francine Prose’s “Voting Democracy Off the Island” or Arlie Russell Hochschild’s “From the Frying Pan into the Fire.” Use the texts to discuss how capitalism works, the economic benefits as well as the other ways it shapes people’s lives, communities, and societies.
2. In his essay, Michael Kamber describes the daily lives of a group of Mexican immigrants to New York City. His title, “Toil and Temptation,” suggests a very particular kind of lifestyle involving long hours of busy-ness, and hard labor. In “Bumping Into Mr. Ravioli” Adam Gopnik describes the daily lives of a very different set of busy New Yorkers. What do these two lifestyles have in common? How are they different? Why? Be specific in your analysis. Your project for this

paper is to use Kamber's essay to reconsider Gopnik's observations about New York City life.

3. The Mexicans in "Toil and Temptation" lead lives in New York that are very different from their lives in Mexico. In "Facing the Village" Lenore Look discovers that life in her father's childhood village is quite different from her family's life in the United States. Use both texts to explore the reality of living in two different cultures. What are the challenges and benefits? How might living a bicultural life shape a person?
 4. The people Kamber portrays in "Toil and Temptation" move back and forth between the United States and Mexico, bringing aspects of their lives with them from place to place. V.S. Naipaul writes in "East Indian" about colonial immigrants who carry aspects of Indian culture from the "Motherland" to his native homeland of Trinidad. He says that "it is the play of a people who have been cut off. To be an Indian from Trinidad, then, is to be unlikely and exotic. It is also to be a little fraudulent. But so all immigrants become" (246). Consider this quotation from Naipaul carefully. How much of this experience of being "cut off" is true of the Mexicans in Kamber's essay? Are they as "unlikely," "exotic," or "fraudulent" as the East Indians from Trinidad? Why or why not? Use both texts to explore the relationship between a "home" country and an "adopted" country. What do we learn about both places, and about the people who travel back and forth between them?
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