Immigration and the Growth of Gang Violence: Mara Salvatrucha and 18th Street

Center for Urban Research and Learning - CURL
Loyola University
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El Salvador background

- Government – Republic, President Mauricio Funes-FMLN
- Geography – Total area 8,124 sq mi
- Population – 6 million (July 2012) 106 in the world
- Monetary Unit – U.S. Dollar
- History – Became independent in 1839, agrarian economy, has been ruled by a series of military dictatorships until 1979
In 1980, they began a military offensive against the government.

U.S. changes policy under President Reagan and increases funding (military) to support the government, approximately $1 million per day.

Peace accords are signed in 1992, but 70,000 people are killed in the conflict and a mass migration to the U.S. begins.

Military recruitment created a group of youth with combat and arms knowledge that made them prime targets for gang life.
Military aid had already been increased under President Carter and was only suspended shortly due to the assassination and rape of four nuns.


Nicaragua Dictator Anastacio Somoza supported by the U.S. was toppled by the Sandinistas (left guerrilla group).

Salvadoran guerrilla groups joined in a united front and began a military campaign.
# Migration before and after Civil War

## El Salvador

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Foreign born</th>
<th>Salvadoran born</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Share of all foreign born</th>
<th>Rank (a)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>9,738,091</td>
<td>6,310</td>
<td>0.10%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>9,619,302</td>
<td>15,717</td>
<td>0.20%</td>
<td>53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>14,079,906</td>
<td>94,447</td>
<td>0.70%</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>19,797,316</td>
<td>465,433</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>31,107,889</td>
<td>817,336</td>
<td>2.60%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>37,960,773</td>
<td>1,094,993</td>
<td>2.90%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: a Rank refers to the position of the Salvadoran born relative to other immigrant groups in terms of size of the population residing in the United States in a given census year.

The Refugee Act of 1980
Nicaraguan Review Program (NRP)
American Baptist Church v. Thornburgh – ABC Class
Nicaraguan Adjustment and Central American Relief Act (NACARA)
Illegal Immigration and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA)

- Imposed 3 and 10 year bars
- It made retroactivity valid for consideration
- Reclassified deportable crimes

- The elimination of "suspension of deportation," which allowed eligible individuals in removal proceedings to adjust to LPR status based on seven years of continuous presence in the country and demonstration of hardship if made to return to their home country
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crimes</th>
<th>Qualifying Conditions</th>
<th>Pre-IIRAIRA</th>
<th>Post IIRAIRA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Violent Offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theft offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alien Smuggling</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>0 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bribery, Counterfeiting, Forgery, and Vehicle Trafficking</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obstruction of Justice, Perjury, and Bribery of a Witness</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gambling and Racketeering Offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport, Visa, and Document Fraud Offenses</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monetary Damages to Government or Victim*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraud, Deceit and Tax Evasions</td>
<td></td>
<td>$200,000</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Term of Imprisonment is calculated upon the sentence that was issued regardless of any suspensions granted.

Note: IIRAIRA added rape and sexual abuse of a minor as an aggravated felony regardless of the sentence issued.

Source: "The Evolving Definition of an Aggravated Felony" by Socheat Chea, findlaw.com
The creation of Department of Homeland Security after the terrorist attacks of 9/11

The collaboration of local and federal authorities

The creation of the MS-13 National Gang Task force

The coordination with Central American Law Enforcement

Mano Dura – Enforcement in Central American countries

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rp5_BLCjVbc&feature=related
Definition
- Mara – Gang
- Salva – short for Salvadorean
- Trucha – Slang for alert

History
- Initially started as a street gang to protect themselves from other gangs
- The military experience of many of the youth made them targets for recruitment of youth gangs
Birth of The Transnational Gang

- Increased deportation of criminal aliens back to the country of origin
- The inability of the country of origin to integrate them into society
  - Social barriers
  - Economic barriers
- The continued surge of migration
MS-13 and 18th Street leadership reached an unprecedented truce to:

* Stop the violence
* Stop recruitment in poor neighborhoods

Results

* 70% drop in the murder rate in the last 6 months