

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

Center for Urban Research and Learning - CURL

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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



El Salvador Civil War



- * 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

US Role in Civil War

- * Military aid had already been increased under President Carter and was only suspended shortly due to the assassination and rape of four nuns
- * Ronald Reagan takes office in 1980 with an anticommunist policy
- * Nicaragua Dictator Anastacio Somoza supported by the U.S. was toppled by the Sandinistas (left guerrilla group)
- * Salvadoran guerilla groups joined in a united front and began a military campaign



Migration before and after Civil War El Salvador

Table 1. Total and Salvadoran Foreign-Born Populations, 1960 to 2008

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

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.

Source: Data for 2000 from the 2000 census; data for 2008 from the American Community Survey 2008. Data for earlier decades from Gibson, Campbell and Emily Lennon, US Census Bureau, Working Paper No. 29, Historical Census Statistics on the Foreign-Born Population of the United States: 1850 to 1990, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC., 1999. Available online.

Immigration, Deportation and Enforcement Policy

- * **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 Imigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA)

- * 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

Crimes	Qualifying Conditions	
	Pre-IIRAIRA	Post IIRAIRA
	Term of Imprisonment*	
Violent Offenses	5 years	1 year
Theft offenses	5 years	1 year
Alien Smuggling	5 years	0 years
Bribery, Counterfeiting, Forgery, and Vehicle Trafficking	5 years	1 year
Obstruction of Justice, Perjury, and Bribery of a Witness	5 years	1 year
Gambling and Racketeering Offenses	5 years	1 year
Passport, Visa, and Document Fraud Offenses	18 months	1 year
	Monetary Damages to Government or Victim*	
Fraud, Deceit and Tax Evasions	\$200,000	\$10,000

* 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

Table 1. Conditions Qualifying for an Aggravated Felony Before and After

The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRAIRA)



Other Factors



- * 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

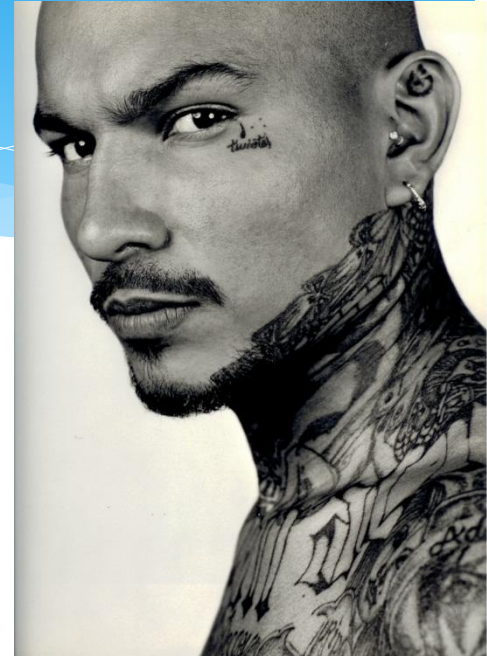
“Mara Salvatrucha”

- * 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

Recent Developments

- * 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