

TEACHER'S GUIDE

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**MISSION 5: "Up from the Dust"**

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**Conclusions on Deportation Laws**

*In 1930, as it became apparent that the stock market crash of 1929 had set off a severe economic depression, some local and state officials believed that their limited relief funds should not be given to foreign-born residents. Mexicans, already the target of discrimination, were particularly vulnerable. Around the country, local officials discouraged Mexican immigrants from applying for relief, used law enforcement to intimidate Mexican communities, and even forcibly deported—or repatriated—thousands of Mexicans and Mexican-American citizens back to Mexico. This federal government report describes the "grave abuses and unnecessary hardships" involved in the way the U.S. enforced existing deportation laws.*

A vigorous enforcement of the deportation laws is necessary both to carry out our immigration policy and to rid the country of undesirable residences unlawfully here. The execution of the laws involves most important rights of personal liberty; the processes of deportation reach over 100,000 persons a year, many of whom are aliens lawfully in the country or United States citizens. In the administration of the laws one agency of the United States Government acts as investigator, prosecutor, and judge, with despotic powers. Under the present system not only is the enforcement of the law handicapped but grave abuses and unnecessary hardships have resulted.

- a. The apprehension and examination of supposed aliens are often characterized by methods unconstitutional, tyrannical, and oppressive.
- b. There is strong reason to believe that in many cases persons are deported when further development of the facts or proper construction of the law would have shown their right to remain.
- c. Many persons are permanently separated from their American families with results that violate the plainest dictates of humanity.
- d. The enforcement of the deportation laws is handicapped by the overcentralization of the administrative machinery and by burdening that machinery with the performance of conflicting duties.

Source: National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, *Report on the Enforcement of the Deportation Laws of the United States* (Government Printing Office, Washington: 1931), 177.  
[http://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:4673882\\$181i](http://iif.lib.harvard.edu/manifests/view/drs:4673882$181i)

