

So mexicans are  
taking jobs from  
americans | poem  
analysis



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## Project 2: Literacy Analysis

The purpose of this paper is to explore the poem, " So Mexicans Are Taking Jobs From Americans, (1979)" by Jimmy Santiago Baca. In the poem, Baca offers criticism of the idea that Mexicans are taking the jobs of American people. He also attempts to expose moral truths of American culture and thought. I will offer an analysis of the poem by exploring the various points of view by the author.

Throughout American history human nature consistently produces racial division. One of the most prominent examples of these racial divisions can be seen in a lot of Americans' negative opinions towards Mexican immigrants. It is a common belief that Mexican immigrants are taking jobs away from American workers. The reality is that Mexican immigrants are simply taking whatever jobs they can in order to generate a source of income. A lot of Americans don't realize that these Mexican workers fill jobs that others do not want and are usually paid less than an American would be paid. In Jimmy Santiago Baca's poem " So Mexicans are taking jobs from Americans," Baca argues that no real theft is taking place. He does this by implementing a mocking humor, asking, " Do they sneak into town at night, mug you with a knife at your throat, saying, I want your job?" (Baca 8-10). Baca goes on to criticize White Americans, pointing out a disparity in wealth, and a lack of humanity towards Mexican immigrants. He points this out by stating, " Only a few people got money in this world, the rest count their pennies to buy bread and butter." (Baca 30-32). Ultimately, through these arguments Baca provides a rebuttal to what he characterizes as the dangerous " gringo" point of view.

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In the beginning of the poem, he explains why he has hatred for White privilege by casting disparages on a fictional White leader, saying, “ An asthmatic leader crawls turtle heavy, leaning on an assistant, and from a nest of wrinkles on his face, rasping ‘ They’re taking our jobs away’ (Baca 12-15).” This helps paint the picture that American leaders are publicly pushing forward and reinforcing this negative opinion. Baca is utilizing this poem as anti-propaganda in an attempt to help create a sense of awareness towards what is going on “ behind the scenes” in society. People who have “ White privilege” use that image to make Americans sound superior, while they portray blacks/brown as an inferior. Stereotypes are most often common with minority groups, such as with Black and Brown peoples.

Baca attacks White American’s individual preoccupation with material items and display of wealth in the first stanza. He begins with a sarcastic question: “ And do you, gringo, take off your ring, drop your wallet into the blanket...” (Baca 4-5). This is a direct condemnation of White American derogatory comments as a result of severe stereotyping. By calling the hypothetical reader “ gringo” and mocking his/her fearful behavior, Baca highlights the devastating disposition of White Americans towards an unknown population. After the couplet, he further decries the economic disparity between both social groups. He says, “ I see the poor marching for a little work, I see small white farmers selling out to clean-suited farmers living in New York...” (Baca 24-26).

Baca uses vivid descriptions when he describes social classes within people. For example, he mentions “ only a few people got all the money in the world, the rest count their pennies to buy bread and butter” (Baca 30-32). On the <https://assignbuster.com/so-mexicans-are-taking-jobs-from-americans-poem-analysis/>

basis of this assumption some people are rich and get to enjoy material wealth, while others feel a hunger that only the poor can know. Most Mexican immigrants only wish is to have the bare minimum such as enough food and clean water. Many of these immigrants remain members of the underclass throughout their lives, only hoping to provide a better life for their children. Almost all Americans just shrug their shoulders and look the other way, and somewhat intimidated, perhaps irritated, by their presence. These are some of the thoughts that more or less comes into Baca's mind when he thinks of stereotypes.

Finally, Baca mentions children in an angry criticism, " We aren't giving the children a chance to live." This sentence explains children are more likely to live in poverty because of the parents who are stuck in poverty and trying to get out. He states, " What they really say is, let them die, and the children too." (Baca 43-44). This sentence is a devastating criticism of American sentiment towards Mexican Immigrants. Just by allowing a perpetuating the belief that Mexican immigrants are taking American jobs, we are letting children die due to lack of basic nutritional needs because the blacks/brown immigrants are not getting enough work. Immigrants are choosing to work in back- breaking conditions so their children can have better aspects in the future. The reason why people have historically chosen to emigrate to America has been in hopes of building a better tomorrow for themselves and their families. Many immigrants also come to escape horrible gang violence and war.

Baca states, " Millions and millions of people fight to live, search for pearls in the darkest depths of their dreams, hold their breath for years trying to cross <https://assignbuster.com/so-mexicans-are-taking-jobs-from-americans-poem-analysis/>

poverty to just having something” (Baca 34-38). The idea of crossing poverty could serve as a metaphor for crossing the border into the United States.

Through this, he claims that underneath American wealth lies the struggle of the immigrant. These immigrants are holding on to the American dream as a means of hope. At the same times these immigrant families bring with them their cultural roots that are valued around family-oriented environments.

Baca mentions, “... I see the poor marching for little work,” (Baca 24). In this culture and sometimes as a necessity for food and housing, children and young teens are forced to work. Many of these immigrant children work with parents in the field, due to low economics and in order to make it within their means. Although child labor was made illegal in 1938 by Congress, provisions were specifically made to allow for children as old as 12 to work in agricultural fields with their parents to help pick fruits and vegetables. These laws and regulations helped the United States lower the amount most families spend on food. This extra discretionary income in turn helped provide more money to flow into consumable goods helping to make the US economy the biggest in the world.

This poem was written almost forty years ago and yet remains an incredibly relevant piece of criticism in today’s society. At this very moment, we are having a national discussion and at times arguing over whether or not a wall will be built along our southern border with Mexico. The argument is still being made by many Americans, including our current President, Donald Trump, that illegal Mexican immigrants are stealing American jobs and hurting working class American families. I think what we can learn from Baca is that this argument continues because Mexican immigrants remain an easy

scapegoat that politicians can use to blame the problems of our society.

Increases in crime, an increased demand on social services, over-crowded public schools, along with depressed American wages are all problems being blamed on illegal immigration crossings from our southern border. Stopping illegal immigration might solve a small percentage of these problems but will also prevent a lot of positive contributions that these immigrants and their children make to our country.

## References

- Baca, J. S., (1979). *So Mexicans are taking jobs from Americans*.