

Deutsche Welle interview with Brisa Ceccon Rocha, 5 November 2015

Deutsche Welle: We're joined here today in the studio by Brisa Ceccon Rocha, a member of the Citizens' Initiative for the Promotion of a Dialogue Culture, who is also taking part in a conference here in Berlin partly funded by Deutsche Welle. Ms Ceccon, welcome to our station. What characteristics are we currently seeing among young Mexicans who immigrate to the US and why do they go there?

Brisa Ceccon Rocha: It can be difficult to provide exact figures on how many young Mexicans immigrate to the US. But some studies estimate that approximately 75% of the Mexicans who immigrate to the US are under 30. They form a large percentage of the people who immigrate to the US.

Deutsche Welle: One difference to the 1970s and 1980s is that the people who now leave for the US are getting younger and younger. Why is this?

Brisa Ceccon Rocha: There are various reasons. Without a doubt, one reason is the violence created by the drugs trafficking. This is one of the biggest reasons why young people try to immigrate to the US. In many cases, they have two options – to immigrate to the US or get involved in organised crime. Another reason that is becoming more important is family reunification. Their relatives emigrated in the 1970s and 1980s and they want to be reunited with them in the States. And economic reasons and job opportunities are also a very important motivation.

Deutsche Welle: Unfortunately, many people are not able to stay in the US. As we saw in the report, deportations have reached alarming figures under Barack Obama. Many young Mexicans who are under 25 have been forcibly repatriated. What effects do these people suffer when they arrive back in Mexico?

Brisa Ceccon Rocha: There are various effects. Some people arrive back in the country where they were born, but no longer recognise because they haven't lived there since they were children. Sometimes they don't even remember Mexico when they are deported. They also return to a society that they do not understand very well. Deportation leaves a very strong psychological trauma. In many cases, they are separated from their family and friends, as well as from their lives and routines. They spent 15 or 20 years in the US and deportation definitely has many consequences for their lives in general. What we are now trying to do in my organisation is to generate or change public policies in Mexico so the country is prepared to receive these young people and to make use of the great human capital provided by these young bicultural and bilingual people. They have great skills in particular areas, but right now they don't have a forum for participating in Mexican society.

Deutsche Welle: Many thanks for joining us today, Ms Ceccon.