



From the archives: How The Times covered mass deportations in the Eisenhower era

By **MATT BALLINGER**

After Donald Trump at this week’s Republican debate mentioned a 1950s federal program to find and deport Mexican nationals living in the U.S., my colleagues and I thought it would be interesting to look at contemporary coverage of the events.

The federal program had the highly unfortunate name “Operation Wetback” — and in 1954 The Times did not spare its use of that offensive term. By 1979, the paper’s stylebook would caution that the word was acceptable only in quotations. The 1995 edition added that even in quotes, the usage required the approval of a senior editor. Outside of specific, rare circumstances, such as references to the past, the newspaper would not use such language today.

But we also can’t ignore the historical record. That’s why we are showing here five dates’ worth of coverage of the federal deportation efforts. The program launched in June 1954, and there are four days of coverage from that year. I’ve also included an article from June 1955 that declares the phenomenon of illegal immigration a “problem solved.”

To read more about how The Times reports on and writes about issues of immigration today, please see this Readers’ Representative article from May 2013: [L.A. Times updates guidelines for covering immigration \(http://www.latimes.com/local/readers-rep/la-me-rr-la-times-guidelines-immigration-20130501-story.html\)](http://www.latimes.com/local/readers-rep/la-me-rr-la-times-guidelines-immigration-20130501-story.html)

Read more: **The dark, complex history of Trump’s model for his mass deportation plan (<http://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-trump-deportation-20151113-story.html>)**

June 12, 1954: Wetbacks' Detention Camp Slated (/june-12-1954-wetbacks-detention-camp-slated/)

Elysian Park Will Be Focal Point in Alien Roundup



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(/june-12-1954-wetbacks-detention-camp-slated/)

June 18, 1954: 500 Nabbed by L.A. Wetback Raiders (/june-18-1954-500-nabbed/)

200 Take Part in Dragnet



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June 19, 1954: 1259 More Wetbacks Deported in Single Day (/june-19-1954-1259-more-deported/)

Yesterday's Returnees at Nogales Make Up Biggest Number in Current Crackdown



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June 20, 1954: Wetbacks Herded at Nogales Camp (/june-20-1954-herded-nogales-camp/)

1187 Wait in Blistering Heat for Last Leg of Journey Home



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(/june-20-1954-herded-nogales-camp/)

June 17, 1955: U.S. Patrol Halts Border 'Invasion' (/june-17-1955-us-patrol-halts-border-invasion/)

Operation Wetback Success Noted on First Anniversary



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