

# Peña Nieto joins Mexican ex-presidents in denouncing Trump

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Mexico's president, Enrique Peña Nieto, issued a statement Monday denouncing Donald Trump, breaking silence studiously observed by his government for the past nine months, since the Republican presidential front-runner launched his campaign with a speech characterizing Mexican immigrants as criminals and "rapists."

Peña Nieto's fairly mild condemnation of Trump, who has made the sealing of the US-Mexican border with a 1,000-mile wall—paid for by Mexico—and the deportation of 11 million undocumented immigrants central themes of his campaign, was contained in an interview published by the Mexican daily *Universal*.

In the same interview, the president defended his drive to privatize the state-owned oil company, PEMEX, and asserted that no one could "even attempt to blame the federal government" for the September 2014 disappearance of the 43 *normalistas*, students from the Ayotzinapa Rural Teachers' College in the state of Guerrero. This despite documented reports of army involvement in the mass kidnapping and murder of the students and subsequent evidence of a deliberate government cover-up.

Trump's rhetoric, the Mexican president said, "hurt a relationship that Mexico has sought with the United States of bridges, of dialogue, of rapprochement, of seeking solutions to shared problems through agreements and shared tasks."

He went on to compare the Republican candidate to fascist dictators of the 1930s: "There have been episodes in the history of humanity where this type of rhetoric has lead to ominous scenarios," he said. "Mussolini and Hitler entered the political scene in the same way; they took advantage of a context—for example an economic crisis. And what they planted created a historical conflagration."

Nonetheless, Peña Nieto stressed that he was not worried about Trump being elected and that his government would "seek the path of mutual respect" in order to "really build a better relationship" with whoever wins the US presidential election in November.

The remarks made by Peña Nieto, of the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), came in the wake of a widely publicized interview in which former Mexican president Vicente Fox, of the right-wing PAN (National Action Party), told Spanish language network Univision's anchor Jorge Ramos: "I'm not gonna pay for that f---ing wall. He should pay for it. He's got the money."

Fox, a wealthy businessman whose election in 2000 ended 75 years of PRI rule, also called Trump "racist" and "crazy."

Incredibly, Fox's statement drew a condemnation from Trump for the former Mexican president's use of an obscenity, saying he "should be ashamed and apologize." This from a candidate who epitomizes the degraded character of the US election campaign, itself an expression of the protracted descent into criminality and parasitism of America's ruling oligarchy.

Fox's successor and fellow PAN politician, Felipe Calderón, similarly told CNBC last month: "Mexican people...are not going to pay a single cent for such a stupid wall. And it's going to be completely useless." He pointed out that the flow of Mexican immigrants returning to Mexico now outstripped the number of Mexicans entering the US.

"They don't want to go," he said, "they can work for a motor company [that's] not in Detroit, I am sorry to say. They are working for a motor company in Hermosillo and Toluca, so Mazda is coming to Mexico, Honda is coming to Mexico. Those kids have jobs in

that industry in Mexico.”

Popular reaction within Mexico to the denunciation of Trump by the three Mexican presidents has been summed up in the Mexican expression, “*Un burro hablando de orejas*” or “a donkey talking about ears”—roughly the equivalent of the English phrase, “the pot calling the kettle black.”

Fox and Calderón presided over governments that sought to subordinate Mexico ever more directly to the domination of US imperialism. Economic stagnation and deepening poverty under Fox led to an increased flow of Mexican immigrants seeking work in the US. Calderón’s reign is synonymous with the escalation of the so-called war on drugs and the implementation of the Mérida Initiative, or Plan Mérida. This brought with it unprecedented operations by US military and intelligence personnel on Mexican soil and a US-funded build-up of the Mexican security forces. Its result was the deaths of more than 80,000 Mexicans under Calderón.

This murderous toll has doubled under their PRI successor, Peña Nieto, whose administration has escalated the attacks on the working class and the subordination of Mexico to the interests of foreign capital. The hallmark of Peña Nieto’s “Pact for Mexico” is the drive to privatize PEMEX and open up Mexican oil fields to exploration and exploitation by the major transnational oil conglomerates.

Like his predecessors, Peña Nieto has collaborated closely with Washington against immigrants, even as the Obama administration has carried out a record number of deportations. Washington and the Mexican government are carrying out a joint policy to suppress the flow of Central American refugees fleeing the intense violence bred by decades of US interventions in the region.

The opposition to Trump by these reactionary Mexican capitalist politicians is based not on a defense of the Mexican people or immigrants in the US, but rather on the interests of foreign capital and Mexico’s ruling oligarchy, the top 1 percent whose wealth is roughly equivalent to that of the bottom 50 percent of Mexican society, more than 60 million people.

Francisco Guzmán, chief of staff to President Peña Nieto, who is taking a leading role in a bid to “counteract misinformation” from the Trump campaign, stressed recently: “This [relationship] is not a

threat but an opportunity. ... The North American region is the most competitive in the world. That [relationship] is much more intelligent than a wall, which, far from boosting trade, will restrict it.”

The Mexican ruling class is offering its services in making US transnationals “the most competitive” by ensuring, in collaboration with the corporatist Mexican trade unions, that workers in the *maquiladora* plants on the border and in the auto parts and assembly plants remain super-exploited and poorly paid. The country’s daily minimum wage, just over \$4, is among the lowest in the hemisphere.

The emergence as a leading US presidential candidate of a fascistic figure like Trump, appealing to racist and anti-immigrant sentiments and promoting reactionary economic nationalism, represents a serious warning to the working class on both sides of the US-Mexican border.

This danger, which is rooted in the deep-going crisis of US and world capitalism, cannot be answered by either appeals to Mexican nationalism or pleas by the Mexican bourgeoisie for continued economic integration. It requires the unification of the working class in US and Mexico in a common struggle to put an end to capitalism.



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