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NBC's Tom Brokaw discusses Mexico's economic and political challenges with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo in 1998.

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Citation

MLA

"A Discussion with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo in 1998." Tom Brokaw, correspondent. NBC

APA

CHICAGO MANUAL OF STYLE

Transcript
A Discussion with Mexican President Ernesto Zedillo in 1998
TOM BROKAW, co-anchor (Mexico City): Earlier today I had an exclusive interview with Mexico's President Ernesto Zedillo, the Yale educated PhD who gets great credit for rescuing Mexico's economy after the '94 peso crisis. Now unemployment here is around 3 percent, and exports are booming. But inflation is so persistent, that high prices make life miserable for the working poor. The average annual wage is just $4,000 a year. The minimum wage for Mexican workers, the equivalent of $4 a day. And milk prices are up 30 percent from a year ago. The staple of the Mexican diet, tortillas are up 20 percent. So President Zedillo is dealing with a volatile combination, and he's well aware that in the United States, illegal Mexican immigration is very controversial.

President ERNESTO ZEDILLO (Mexico): It has become a very hot issue. I think that all of us should provide more information so that people in your country should have a more balanced view of the contribution that migrants make to your own economy and to your own society.

BROKAW: Some people would say, however, that President Zedillo doesn't do enough to stop them on this side of the border because it relieves a problem that he has if they stay here.

President ZEDILLO: That's not true. I think that's a distorted view. On the contrary, I would like that people to stay in Mexico for--because for the most part they are highly productive, hard working people, well-behaved people for the most part. What I'm doing is to work hard here in Mexico to create employment opportunities so that that people is retained in our country.

BROKAW: Do you think that the Mexicans who go from here to the United States are exploited?

President ZEDILLO: In some cases that happens, but I think they wouldn't go if they didn't found the right opportunities. But I insist, for us the important thing is that we create in Mexico, conditions so that people don't go to your country.

BROKAW: Let me ask you about another very controversial and tragic development in your country, what happened in Chiapas, when 45 people were killed. Many people in Mexico believe that they were killed because they resisted your political party and its policies. President
ZEDILLO: After that happened, from the very first moment, my government, the federal government ordered an investigation, and I think we have been quite successful in persecuting people responsible for this terrible crime. I think it doesn't serve the truth to establish wrong, false motivations about these crimes. I think we have to look at the deep social conditions in which those people have lived for a long time. BROKAW: Are you saying that the rebels in Chiapas do have a just cause to a degree? President ZEDILLO: I'm not justifying in any sense their methods, but I understand why they were protesting. We have problems of poverty that should have been tackled many years ago but were not. BROKAW: But can you see that from the outside looking in, for all the progress that Mexico has made in its economy and in electoral reform, when you have an incident like the atrocities in Chiapas, and you have the drug cartels operating in the north of Mexico, that the rest of the world says there really has been no change in Mexico. President ZEDILLO: You mentioned drugs. Well, what I would say is that Mexico is a true victim of drug trafficking. We're not a large producing drug country. We are a place... BROKAW: You're a highway, kind of. President ZEDILLO: ...we are a traffic place, and we are victims of whoever produces the drugs and whoever consumes the drugs. BROKAW: Do you think that in your lifetime that Mexico will be a full-blown economy? President ZEDILLO: We have to have discipline, and I do hope that during my lifetime I can see the results of that effort. That is not the effort of a president, but is the effort of the Mexican society at large.