

Suffering wrongly lauded - LTE *Arizona Daily Star* (October 10, 1996)

I thought I had grown immune to the blasé manner in which free-trade advocates brush off the suffering of millions in the name of economic integration, but I was caught off guard by the Sept. 26 opinion piece by Thomas L. Friedman (“Eight lessons from the successful bailout of Mexico’s economy”).

Friedman’s fourth lesson correctly states that Mexico imposed a drastic cut in the already desperate nation’s standard of living so the new debt could be repaid.

Friedman then quotes with apparent approval the chairman of a “Mexican mining conglomerate” to the effect that the Mexican family structure “took the place of Social Security and unemployment insurance.”

How appalling to see the abject suffering of millions of people praised as a kind of stoic or heroic patriotism, as though the rapidly increasing numbers of homeless unemployed in Mexico have willingly foregone the basic necessities so their country can be hung out to dry in the world market.

This would be ludicrous if it weren’t so appalling. Friedman’s primer is little more than [a] panegyric to globalization and the growing inequities it promotes.

Many believe that the growing unrest in Mexico may foreshadow the rebellion Friedman says there should have been, had not the Mexicans been “too busy just trying to survive.”

There should also be a little more concern about the human cost of that survival effort and some less sanguine consideration of the U.S. supported economic policies causing it.