

Brazilian immigration to united states history essay



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It is estimated that eleven to fifteen million fresh immigrants arrived in the U. S. between the year 1990 and 2000 and were integrated into to the U. S. workforce. This when compared with any time in history, is a high level of immigration, more than the previous Great Wave. In the previous ten years, people born outside the US comprised 41. 4% of the growth in U. S. inhabitants. More than 50 percent of the growth in the country's civilian workforce can be pointed to new overseas immigrants. New overseas immigrants are younger, less learned, more probable working in the private sector as wage and salary workers, and over-represented in many industrial sectors, than the indigenous labor force. 10. According to Brazilian government numbers, there are more than 1. 5 million Brazilians living out of the country. America is the main point of entry: about, 700, 000 Brazilians lived in the U. S in 1997. The highest concentration was New York followed by Massachusetts and Florida respectively (Heloisa 10).

In the past there were many immigrants in Brazil, they came from all over the world. For instance, in the 1960s, there was a surge of immigrants to Brazil. However things have now changed and it is the Brazilians immigrating to Europe, the US and Asia. Statistics show that at least a million Brazilians have immigrated to other countries in the past decade; this is due to the economic problems Brazil is facing and people are in pursuit of a good life. Another reason for Brazilians immigration is the 1964 coup d'état of, thousands of people opposed to the military regime at the time were forced into exile for fear of persecution. In 1979 the Brazilian government offered amnesty to the political exiles. Majority of these exiles came back to Brazil after the amnesty, but the figures of economic emigrants increased in the

1980s; especially true after the oil crisis and the military government's financial mismanagement in 1979. By 1987 about 250, 000 Brazilians were outside the country. Ever since, emigration has gone up at a rate of 20% annually. In early 1969 the Banco do Brasil opened a branch in New York City. Later that year the Brazilian-American chamber of Commerce was started to support investment and trade between the US and Brazil (Davis p. 10).

There have been no official statistics about Brazilian emigrants since 1991. What is known is that there were 436, 177 passports issued by the Federal Police in 1993(the figures have since then gone higher). There are no statistics to show how many Brazilians have emigrated but a majority of Brazilians in the US were born in Brazil. Evidence from Brazilian Geography and Statistics Institute (IBGE) shows that over a million Brazilians between the ages of 20 to 44 from the 1991 census were ' missing' The statistical ' absence of this age bracket was explained logically by Brazilian emigration (Alejandro p. 14).

Brazilians in the East Coast: The Unseen Minority that Everybody Sees

Possibly, nearly half of the Brazilians living outside Brazil reside in the United States. The biggest Brazilian community is found on the East Coast. New York is estimated to have almost 70, 000 to 160, 000 Brazilian emigrants. A further 140, 000 are thought to live in Boston, 70, 000 in Florida), 30, 000 in California, 40, 000 in Houston, Texas, and another 15, 000 in Washington, DC.

According to the Center for Immigration Studies in New York, more than half of the Brazilians who moved to the US already have friends or a member of family in the U. S. with whom they live with after they land in U. S. Nearly a quarter of the immigrants do not plan on going back to Brazil.

An American anthropologist by the name Maxine Margolis, took three years analyzing the Brazilian neighborhood in New York examining more than 30 Brazilian immigrants better known by the tag Brazucas. She circulated her work as the book *Little Brazil* (1994). She established that majority of the Brazilians she examined were feeling shame to be immigrants with almost 80% answering that they were not immigrants, but only passing through. Margolis found out that most of the Brazilians in the US are from middle-class households and that the “ Immigrants shield themselves from dissatisfaction by believing that they’re doing these jobs only for a year or two, that it’s a short-term situation.”

“ In spite of what people think, most Brazilian migrants arrive in US with money and links to live for a short while before getting employed,” Gino Agostinelli, of the Center for Immigration Studies, has informed the Sao Paulo newspaper *Folha de Sao Paulo*. “ They don’t seem to be desperate individuals, but persons with substantial amounts of money who want to explore a different way of living.”

Almost 60% of Brazilian citizens, who move to the US ordinarily find employment within three weeks on landing on US soil. Initially, majority of them search for employment in the same line of work in which they were employed in Brazil mainly because this is one of the straightforward ways of

obtaining a green card, the lasting resident visa for foreigners living in the US. On the other hand, nearly 75% of Brazilians residing in the US are illegitimate immigrants. (With such a number of illegal immigrants in the US, I can presume that the state unofficially needs the immigrants, legal or illegal. I have a few of my friends who are illegal Brazilian Immigrants, in the course of my research I talked with a few of them to get more insight on the issue of Brazil Immigrants in the US. I asked one of them if he would like to have any knowledge or information on the immigration service and he said it was of no importance to him, because they (the illegal immigrants) don't really have to be troubled about the immigration service. He further told me that there is always a way to escape the immigration rules. Another one of the illegal immigrants that I interviewed told me that he was once caught and thrown out of US and he had just come back but this time he had changed his name and come through Mexico which borders the US or and even others even use 'some other way' to get back which he did not disclose to me.

A very high percent of illegal immigrants do some odd menial jobs and earn the minimum wage of between \$1000 and \$2000 a month. This means that a majority of the Brazilians in the US fall in that bracket. In fact only about 4% of Brazilians living in New York earn more than that; about \$3000 a month. Most of the Brazilians do the same menial jobs they did while they were in Brazil. It is in fact very sad to note that even the immigrants that have had a descent college education still work as housekeepers, maids, nannies and cooks. This is especially very common for Brazilian women immigrants. As for men only about 4% even have an elementary education and therefore

most of them work as laborers or as construction workers among other menial jobs (Research Division for the Office of New Bostonians).

The Brazilian community in New York has a great number of men working as shoe shiners and women working as 'go-go' dancers. Brazilians are in fact stereotyped in these two professions and therefore out of the immigrants consider such jobs 'shameful'. Another thing that bothers the Brazilian immigrants is that they cannot make a mark in their adopted countries as most of them work for long hours. As a result most of them are grouped as Hispanics by the Americans. An interesting trend of Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts is that a survey by Marte's of 300 Brazilians in 1996 showed that there was an increase of families immigrated as opposed to single males in the past.

About 48% of the immigrants were married and 52% came along with all their children to Massachusetts. Of all the participants of the survey twelve percent had college education, thirty one percent had a high school diploma, 12% had some college, and 16% had no college education. The reasons for migration were same as those of other immigrants that is, continuous economic crisis as well as with violence in town areas in the early and mid-nineties to also propel the upper-middle class families to leave Brazil and open businesses. I had previously talked to an immigrant who told me that he moved to the US because of disappointment at work in Brazil. He said that he had a high skilled job but the business collapsed and his wages decreased to very low levels. Others said that they came to the US to make more money, save it and buy property in Brazil. Different Brazilians had different reasons but I thought that Kaka summarized it all " I came here <https://assignbuster.com/brazilian-immigration-to-united-states-history-essay/>

thinking that life was easy and I would make more money and hoping to go back to Brazil and never want to be employed". In other word they all came to chase the American dream and get back to their country and only to realize that that was just an illusion.

There was a sharp contrast of the population of the Brazilians in the US from two census conducted. The most logical explanation was that neither the 2000 nor 1990 census mentioned Brazil as a country of choice and therefore most of them chose to identify themselves as Hispanics or white for fear of deportation after filling the Census forms. Another school of thought was that most of them lived in overcrowded houses and therefore lied about the sizes of their families in order to avoid prosecution. Lastly, Brazilians do not like to be classified as Hispanics unless they understand the classification process of race and ethnicity (Davis p. 12).

While the reasons for this census disparity may be arguable, the mystery is still there. What is the number of Brazilians living in America? Brazilians continue to flock US and most of them are undocumented. The fear of deportation is widespread among immigrant communities and therefore stops them from participating in survey research by the government or any other entity. There are many Brazilians in Massachusetts and the reason for them to go there is varied. Interviews conducted in Lowell show that most of them get there as a result of family ties, friends. These contacts with others in Brazil make them choose Massachusetts as a city to settle. Some interviewees offered an explanation that they get a place to stay before they move on to other places but end up settling there. Also, some Brazilians live

in Massachusetts because they believe that the state provides ample public services, such as health insurance and public schools to immigrants.

Racial and Ethnic Identity of Brazilian Immigrants

Salgado (2) observed that “ Significant as it is to comprehend how U. S racial and ethnic pecking order, family members, and principles have an effect on migrants, rearrangement of racial and ethnic uniqueness in the United States must be connected with the racial and cultural occurrences immigrants came across in their countries of birth”. Based on my study and discussions with a good number of Brazilian immigrants in Massachusetts, their perception tends to change depending on the life they are exposed to. The replacement of nationality over race is constantly present in Brazilian immigrants’ narratives of self description. This preference to define oneself nationally rather than ethnically is entrenched in major beliefs.

First, the majority of immigrants, mainly those who don’t have a full racial or ethnic awareness, are more likely to confuse these three terms. Second, race interactions in Brazil have habitually been ignored specifically because racial matter were presumably determined by a genial joining during colonization and afterwards highlighted by the following belief of racial democracy.

Concluding thoughts

A future evaluation of the Brazilian Immigrant Community

Forecasting what will occur to the Brazilian Immigrant Community in the days to come is a complex and extremely doubtful process. Nevertheless, there are basically two critical issues that will form this immigrant population progress for generations to come.

Firstly, Brazilian immigrants, like majority of other immigrant units, come to US with willpower to be successful. With that appear fresh new thoughts that can lead to an industrial drive. Specifically, many Brazilians migrate when they are young, with the clear mission of working, regularly with a fairly high level of education. Occasionally the migrant can converse in English. In addition, Furthermore, currently, Brazilians often feel relatively calm and relaxed in the region, observing that they frequently are seen in better terms by Americans compared to other immigrant groups (Maxine p. 5).

Secondly, the Brazilian immigrant community may underrate the obstacles that they may encounter in the years to come. Immigration rank, usually thought to be the primary obstacle that Brazilian immigrants encounter, is only one of many stumbling blocks that Brazilians will have to meet. In fact, even US Census data shows that Brazilians in Boston MA, have not only a depleted percentage of the inhabitants with a “ middleclass standard of living” when put side to side with the native and foreign born residents, but they also have a slightly higher percentage of the inhabitants lacking a high school diploma.