

Social aspects of mr. k's immigration

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Social Aspects of Mr. K's Immigration Experience in the United States. The United States of America originally a nation of immigrants is rapidly becoming a nation of native born citizens. We have by now had an opportunity to produce the native-born individual someone we might label as an "American". Today, the number of foreign-born persons in the United States is about 3, 000, 000 of the population, and about 5, 000, 000 of Americans are the children of immigrants. Due to the new Immigration Reform and Control Act the days of mass immigration are over, but the influence of the movement will never be eased. (Arun and Daniel p. 1) This paper is based on the interview conducted on April 20th of 2009 with Mr. M. K. an immigrant from Ukraine who came to the United States in 1996 from Ivano Frankivsk a city in western Ukraine to escape political and economic corruption following the early 90's collapse of the Soviet Union. His decision to leave his wife and two kids was not an easy one. Being a part of the former Soviet Union KGB, he immigrated to America for personal and political reasons. But the largest reason for coming here is for freedom. The freedom to live where we want, to own property, to take part in the government, to give a better future for our kids and most importantly, the freedom to be treated like a human being (K 2009). Mr. K reunited with his family in 2004 and is now a citizen of the United States. In this interview he reflected upon his social experience as an immigrant. Q: Did you see a different lifestyle here? A: Oh yes!! American citizen is very independent, career oriented and self-isolated inside his family and his house. Ukrainians are way too different? We are Europeans, but unlike Germans, British or French we have very few social protection. We work very hard, but we are

just in the middle of the road to democracy and civilization. For hundreds of years we've been slaves of Russia and many people from Eastern Ukraine still are (K 2009). Q: What do you think about American Culture? A: Big difference! We have deep Orthodox Christian traditions, beautiful churches, icons, religious holidays and strong belief. Our people compose original melodies and poetry, we love to sing and dance. We are mostly a "homocultural society". On the other hand, for many years America was considered to be a "Melting Pot" for immigrants, but now it's multi-pieces of different communities. Chinese, Mexicans, Irish, Russians, Jews, Ukrainians, Italians do not melt into one nation, one culture or the language (K 2009). Unfortunately, I do not feel we have Ukrainian community here. Everyone is too busy, most people see each other at Sunday service only. We do not have our representatives at city, state or federal level. Maybe I don't know them. In Ukraine people help each other a lot, I'll never ask my friend to pay me because I spend the whole day repairing his car. America is different (K 2009). Q: What do you like about Americans? A: Smiles, smiles, smiles! And you know what? They respect smart people, those who want to learn something new and those who have new ideas (K 2009). Q: Can you compare your experience with that of earlier immigrants? A: Their lives were much better, every year the government is cutting the funds for medicate. More and more doctors refuse to accept these insurances and ask for cash or for a certain healthcare plan. Most of us immigrants do not live here, we just try to survive and we hope our kids will enjoy a better life (K 2009). Q: Still, there are some benefits of immigration to America? A: Socially I feel very comfortable here because of the freedom of speech and religion. The

government is still paying for my insurance and I still feel protected. I feel safe in the streets of New York, because police and ambulance come and help you in seconds. My kids got grants from the government for college and they hopefully will enjoy a safe future. To tell the truth, most problems or rather the problems solving depends on how well you speak, write and understand English. That's why I never blame America and Americans if I hear "no" at interviews. I wish immigrants remember that "got help you if you help yourself" (K 2009). Through lectures, videos, books and articles this semester we have learned many aspects of immigration in the United States. However, interviewing an immigrant was a very rewarding and interesting experience. Being an immigrant myself I disagree with some of Mr K comments. He mentioned America to be a "Melting Pot" for immigrants and that there is no Ukrainian community. Even though Americans have adopted many of the customs and ideas of the immigrants as their own, people do form communities. We have Ukrainian community in Yonkers, New York City, Stamford, Connecticut and New Jersey. We have Ukrainian churches and most of my friends are Ukrainian. Immigrants from the same country tend to settle in the same neighborhoods and establish their native religious and cultural institutions. Most immigrant parents try to teach their children the language, traditions, religious customs, and moral outlook that is their heritage. The concept of cultural pluralism encourages preservation of heritage and acceptance of difference (Foner p 744-745). Many cities and communities have ethnic festivals to bring together people who share a common national heritage. These events remind Americans that the nation is not really a melting pot at all. Thought this interview Mr. K emphasizes that in spite of

advantage this great country offers, its still isn't easy being a newcomer in the USA. Learning English and finding a job is a great challenge.

Nevertheless, most immigrants learn to love this nation. Immigrants who appreciate this country most are those who lived and suffered elsewhere.

America has given many people a sense of hope and safety that they never had before.