

Immigration to the united states and america

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ImmigrationJennifer Lippert ENG/102 March 12, 2012 Dr. Kimberly Stanley In the United States of America, we live in a sea of opportunity. Many people come from other countries to live in America to explore those opportunities, but the laws governing immigration have failed to change with the ever-increasing immigrant population. We watch as Border States deal with the rising costs to support immigrants and wonder whether this was what the founding fathers had in mind when the first Immigration Laws were passed.

We wonder about the effects on America's economy as our immigrant population work in this country then send these U. S. dollars to their home country to support their families. We observe an ever-changing landscape continually affected by the legal and illegal immigrants who land in our great country. We contemplate whether America is the land of opportunity and the land of the free, or simply a place for immigrants to land and live for free. As citizens, it is not only our right, but also our duty, to question our leaders and our laws particularly when those laws no longer appear to fit America's vision.

Immigration laws have remained stagnant for far too long and, although immigrants were the founding fathers of our nation, it is time to examine America's position before the social and economic costs become insurmountable. America's founding fathers believed that immigration was necessary to increase the population of our country, but also believed that they must prove loyalty only to America to become citizens. Beginning with George Washington, in the late eighteenth century, a statement was made that immigrants should be integrated into American life so that Fonte (n. .) " by an intermixture with our people, they, or their descendants,

get assimilated to our customs, measures, laws: in a word soon become one people. " This then became a new basis for immigration. In this case, the term " assimilates" means to conform to a way of life. In a 1790 speech to Congress about immigration, James Madison argued that America should welcome those immigrants who could be incorporated into our society, but exclude those immigrants that could not readily assimilate.

Thomas Jefferson was convinced that immigrants were not prepared for the new society America was building and thought the country should wait another 27 year before opening its shores. In fact, when addressing immigration in Notes on the State of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson wrote: Fonte (n. d.) They will bring with them the principles of the governments they leave, imbibed in their early youth; or, if able to throw them off, it will be in exchange for an unbounded licentiousness, passing, as is usual, from one extreme to another. It would be a miracle were they to stop precisely at the point of temperate liberty.

These principles, with their language, they will transmit to their children. In proportion to their numbers, they will share with us the legislation. They will infuse into it their spirit, warp and bias its direction, and render it a heterogeneous, incoherent, distracted mass. In other words, by allowing a mass immigration into such a new society, America could be allowing the immigrant population to distort the principles established by our new laws and policies. To some degree, Alexander Hamilton echoed the thoughts of Thomas Jefferson, but his emphasis was on the threat to national safety.

His concern was in granting citizenship to every immigrant upon arrival in the country. He believed that there should be some proof of allegiance to

America before any rights were given to new immigrants. However, both Jefferson and Hamilton shared the same beliefs that immigrants should conform to the ways of America and leave their old government attachments behind. After much debate, it appeared that Jefferson and Hamilton could claim a small victory. The Naturalization Law of 1795 was passed, which required that before becoming American citizens, immigrants would have to "renounce under oath" all previous sovereign allegiances.

This "renunciation clause" remains part of the naturalization law and part of the oath to the U. S. Constitution that all new citizens must take. (Fonte, n. d.). Changes in immigration laws over the past two centuries have certainly contributed to the overall rise in U. S. immigration statistics, but it would take almost a century before the first amendment to that law would take shape. The Naturalization Law of 1795 required five years of residence and a three-year waiting period before citizenship was granted. This allowed new immigrants the opportunity to assimilate and demonstrate allegiance to America. However, by 1868, with the end of the Civil War, the population was burgeoning with ex-slaves and their descendants who had been brought to this country without the rights of citizenship. In fact, in 1857, the Supreme Court ruled that African Americans were not citizens and were not entitled to the rights and privileges of citizenship. In order to rectify the situation, the Fourteenth amendment was passed which granted citizenship to all persons born or naturalized in the United States of America. Interestingly enough, it would take another war and its devastation to bring about a new amendment to U. S. immigration law in 1921 with the Emergency Quota Act.

Following World War I, the country faced widespread unemployment and an anti-immigration uprising. This Act limited the number of immigrants allowed to enter America from any country on an annual basis to three percent of the number of residents from that same country according to the 1910 census with the hope of maintaining the ethnic composition of America. While the quota system remained in effect until 1965, there was one additional revision to the Emergency Quota Act in 1952 with the Immigration Act of 1952, which revised the quotas and eliminated racial distinctions from immigration policy.

National quotas were eventually abolished entirely in the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965 at the height of the Civil Rights movement, changing the face of America, as it was then known. According to 2011 Census statistics, the U. S. immigrant population continues to change the face of America. Not only do non-whites account for ninety two percent of the U. S. population growth in the past ten years, but also forty million foreign-born individuals now reside in the United States, making up almost thirteen percent of our population.

Most of this population lives in metropolitan areas rather than the suburbs, with estimates as high as fifty percent of the population in twenty-two large cities across America. In fact, nine metropolitan areas saw their immigrant population double in the last ten years, but the five cities with the largest immigrant populations (New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Miami and Houston) actually decreased their share of this part of the population over the last ten years dropping to a total of 38 percent of the population in 2010 compared to 43 percent in 2000.

In some areas of the country, rapid growth in immigration population may create policy backlashes, which could ultimately threaten these places' long-standing economic comfort. Given the current economic climate and high unemployment rates, do the most recent census figures show any relationship with rising immigration levels? The best available evidence suggests that neither legal nor unauthorized immigration is the cause of high unemployment, and that the higher wages and purchasing power which formerly unauthorized immigrants would enjoy were they to receive legal status would sustain new jobs (American Immigration Council, 2012).

In order to make informed decisions regarding immigration reform, however, we cannot limit our assessment to the changing face of our nation; we must also examine the economic cost to the United States. Recent studies have shown that the United States spends \$113 billion annually to support both legal and illegal immigrants, but much of the total U. S. burden is borne by only a few Border States. California, for example, reports spending close to ten billion dollars a year to support its immigration population, which now accounts for almost forty three percent of its total population.

Texas reports spending \$4. 5 to \$6 billion per year sustaining its illegal immigrant population and Arizona drops \$2. 7 billion on its immigrant population. While Border States would likely argue for more stringent laws to limit the number of immigrants allowed to enter the country in order to lessen their burden, there are also States that would argue against reform to the immigration system due to its projected adverse effect on their economy. For instance, Kansas has reported that it could possibly lose up to \$57. 3 million in their income if stricter immigration laws come into affect.

They claim that with change in immigration laws only comes a higher tax for their state. Kansas also claims that the State will lose millions of dollars in court costs alone if the law makes it difficult for immigrants to live and work in their State. As staggering as these numbers are, other studies show that immigrants have actually boosted the U. S. economy by bringing in \$245 million to the gross domestic product. This estimate, however, is nothing compared to estimated wages of foreign employees working in the United States for less than one year which grew from \$550 million in \$1980 to \$8. billion in 2003. These earnings, in turn, are partially returned to immigrant workers' home countries to help support families in the form of remittances out of the United States. In fact, a study by the Bureau of Economic Analysis in 2003 reported that " a considerable share of all immigration is motivated at least in part by the opportunity to send home remittances. " According to the study, workers' remittances from the United States went from \$4. 1 billion in 1981 to \$25. 5 billion in 2003. While these reported numbers sound staggering, remittances are not considered to have a negative impact on the U.

S. economy. In fact, the study also notes that remittances exceed U. S. government provided development assistance to developing countries and may be partially responsible for keeping the cost of such assistance down. America is the land of opportunity. When we look at current immigration laws, our founding fathers' vision for growth in this country remains intact. In fact, the ideas brought forth by Jefferson and Hamilton for allegiance to the country is still a part of the renunciation oath taken by all new citizens.

By the numbers, there is evidence to support immigration reform and there is evidence that the influx of immigrants to the United States actually help our economy. Until the country can come together as a whole to fully support immigration reform, it is likely that it will take another catastrophic event to catapult immigration to the forefront of American policy reform.

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