

Knowledge is power critical essay

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The differences in cultural beliefs and traditions resulted in the difficulty of Cambodian migrants in adjusting to the lifestyle in the United States. However, due to the way American culture affects the way these people live, gradual changes had been seen. It is through this that we see a shift in the perception of Cambodian refugees concerning different things. In the end, such redefinition of concepts and knowledge cemented the Southeast Asians into the American welfare state.

Looking at the issue presented by Ong, there are indeed drastic changes and a gradual shift as far as knowledge is concerned within the parameters of refugees living in the United States. Seeing these there are two (2) ways in which the production of knowledge increased which in turn cemented the role of South East Asians in the region. First, is that it created an opportunity for the acculturation process to happen among Cambodian immigrants in the United States. Seeing the catastrophe in Cambodia, residents sought to look for places that their security and stability can be assured. “ By raising their arms, they elected to go to America, the home of freedom and wealth, far away from the demented Pol Pot regime, the chaos, poverty, and political uncertainty of Cambodia.” (Ong, 2003)

The obvious problem that can be seen during the first entry of Cambodians in the United States was the issue of adjusting to the different norms and practices by the state. “ The most obvious difficulties faced by Cambodian refugees in the United States have to do with intergenerational conflicts, shifting gender norms and opportunities, problems of economic marginalization, and problems of racial discrimination—all of which are mediated by state interventions in making these immigrants into “ good

citizens.” (AESonline. org, 2006) Though such case may be problematic, it solidified the information needed and the requirements set to become integrated into the state.

Another problem within the realms of acculturation is the shifting of power by those who speak the language at to those who do not. “ The change in power relations between parents and children led to children being frustrated with parents not being able to help them with homework.” (Vang, 2004, p. 2) Another issue that can be analyzed in the situation is the role of both men and women particularly among Cambodian refugees. “ For men and women, welfare dependency increased women’s power relative to men’s” (Vang, 2004, p. 2)

Also, there is the case of trying to cope and adjust to the service providers that caters to the services of both refugees and immigrants. “ By having the right to intervene in domestic disputes and to set new norms of gender behavior, service workers were able to redefine refugee ethnicity morally, a process that also legitimized their professional domination over impoverished, disadvantaged, and racialized Americans” (Ong, p. 167)

This in turn created a spectrum of actions among the service providers as a means of acculturating the Cambodian immigrants/ refugees. “ Similarly, the involvement of social workers in family life results for some in new opportunities for restructuring domestic gender and generational dynamics, whereas for others, it becomes a means of reinforcing traditional relations of hierarchy and community.

The second reason is that the production of knowledge also legitimized the role of Cambodian refugees in the society. This means that these people, after the adjustment process became part of the overall dynamics and processes in the American society. “ Such authority resulted in the refugees having to define and redefine themselves to " fit" into particular categories in order to obtain resources for survival.” (Vang, 2004, p. 2)

However, the legitimization only serves as a complement for every citizenry and for the part of the minority this means very little. Yes, such actions may seem beneficial in the way that they can acquire services from the welfare state, but overall the treatment among immigrants is the same as of blacks and other minorities. “ It also appears that assumptions about the black and Hipic underclass colored the teachers' expectations about the precariousness of the refugee's self-sufficiency, the limited kinds of jobs they could potentially fill, and their need for social discipline on arrival on the American mainland” (Ong, 2003, p. 84)

In the end, such knowledge of the situation paved the way for the development of new understandings and practices that is only unique to Cambodian refugees. It created a new avenue for changes that both showcased the good side and bad side of things. The dynamics of cultural activity are presented by Ong in the book and such creatively served the way Southeast Asians became part of the American society and culture.

References

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