Introduction

> It is not easy being a minority in the United States. The crushing weight of irrational ignorance is directed toward you.
>
> —Bill O'Reilly, *Who's Looking Out For You?*

A close friend related this scenario: He had flown from Los Angeles to Charleston, South Carolina, to attend a meeting of hundreds of educators from across the country. These educators were meeting to discuss the need for greater cultural diversity in the classroom curriculum. As he chatted with the taxi driver about the weather and tourists, the driver, who appeared to be about 40 and was white, asked, "How long have you been in this country?" My friend replied, wincing, "All my life. I was born in Los Angeles." With a strong southern drawl, the driver remarked, "I was wondering because your English is excellent." My friend, as he had so many times before, explained, "My grandfather came here from Japan in the 1880s. My family has been here in America for over a hundred years." To the driver, my friend did not look "American." His eyes and complexion looked foreign.

At that moment, both my friend and the taxi driver became uncomfortably conscious of a racial divide. He did not see my friend as American. He had a narrow but widely shared sense of the past, a history that has viewed "American" as European in ancestry. "American" has been defined as "white."

However, America has been racially diverse since its very beginning when the Spanish founded St. Augustine in 1565, and this reality is becoming more and more visible. Culturally diverse groups are fast becoming a majority. These groups already predominate in major cities

across the country: New York City, Chicago, Atlanta, Detroit, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami, and Washington, D.C.

This emerging demographic diversity has raised fundamental questions about America's identity and culture. In 1990, *Time* magazine published a cover story entitled "America's Changing Colors." "Someday soon," the magazine announced, "white Americans will become a minority group." How soon? By 2056, most Americans will trace their descent to "Africa, Asia, the Hispanic world, the Pacific Islands, Laos, Thailand, Arabia, almost anywhere but white Europe" (William, 1990, p. 28).

This dramatic change in our nation's ethnic composition is altering the way we think about ourselves. "The deeper significance of America's becoming a majority nonwhite society is what it means to the national psyche, to individuals' sense of themselves and their nation, their idea of what it is to be an American" (William, 1990, p. 31).

Educators believe we need to know about racial and ethnic diversity. We need to see events from the viewpoint of different groups. We need to reach toward a more comprehensive understanding of American history.

The reality of racial tension rudely woke America like a fireball in the night on April 29, 1992. Immediately after the Los Angeles police officers were found not guilty of brutality against Rodney King, rage exploded in the streets of Los Angeles. During the nightmarish rampage, scores of people were killed, over 2,000 injured, 12,000 arrested, and almost a billion dollars' worth of property destroyed. The live television images mesmerized America. The rioting and murderous melee on the streets resembled the fighting in Beirut and the West Bank. The thousands of fires burning out of control and the dark smoke filling the skies brought back images of the burning oilfields of Kuwait during Desert Storm. Entire sections of Los Angeles looked like a bombed city. "Is this America?" "Can't we all get along?"

One of the lessons of the Los Angeles explosion is the recognition of the fact that we are a multicultural society and that race can no longer be defined in the binary terms of black and white. Hispanic, Asian, American Indian, and Arab also represent our diverse nation, and even though the Rodney King incident represented black and white racial tension, many of these groups have experienced similar explosions of tension.

What is the nature of malevolence? Is there a deep need for group identity rooted in hatred for the other? Is ethnic pluralism possible for America? What does our diversity mean? Where is it leading us?

One way to try to eliminate hatred is for our society's various ethnic groups to develop a greater understanding of each other. For example, how can African Americans and Korean Americans work out their conflicts unless they learn about each other's cultures, histories, and economic situations? Shared knowledge about our ethnic diversity is required. We must step back and look at the rich and complex portrait our culturally diverse students present in the classroom.

On the fringes of most school environments gathers a shadow population of students whose motivation and achievement are stymied. Many of these are culturally diverse students who are not being well served by our public schools. Precious little attention is given either to the needs of these young people or to their assets. They are often viewed as deviants from the "regular" students, outsiders who are not productive members of the learning community. This persistent problem of increasing numbers of students who are not succeeding in the classroom must be attacked because youth who fall on the margins are as deserving as those who thrive in the mainstream.

What is wrong with the following statements?

"LaMar is such a social and active child; if only he would calm down, talk less, and stay out of trouble, he would be a good student. He might be able to be a leader if only he would conform."

"Mai Lee is one of my brightest students, but she has priorities other than school. She belongs to a Hmong community dance group that appears to be her focus. She puts more effort into dancing and performing than into achieving in school."

"Hector shows some promise and wants to become a doctor. He'll never make it because his grades in math and science are less than desirable. He seldom comes to class, and when he does, he is not prepared. The other Hispanic kids seem to be struggling too."

"Thunder's performance is inconsistent. He makes a D as easily as he makes an A. His projects are excellent when he feels motivated, but he does poorly on tests and he seems lazy and uncooperative."

The told and untold stories of many culturally diverse students have not been positive when it comes to education. The above comments come in many guises. Teachers appear to recognize potential, promise, or

untapped abilities in these students but are often frustrated by the student's behavior.

Self-esteem and self-concept issues, identity issues, the classroom climate, curriculum and instruction, teacher explanations, peer pressure and relationships, and family concerns inhibit students' motivation and achievement.

The common perception is that students would not have academic issues if they would "just try harder," "pay attention," and "listen." However, it is not that simple. Many culturally diverse students have had little or no early intervention and may lack the basic skills to take advantage of educational opportunities. Reversing underachievement may be especially difficult if it is related to social barriers, such as poverty; or to educational barriers, such as inappropriate curriculum and instruction.

Many of our culturally diverse students become "in-school dropouts" who are disillusioned or disenchanted with school, as reflected by poor motivation, lack of interest, boredom, daydreaming, acting out, tardiness, or truancy. Such students are psychologically distanced from school. Others physically reject schools, as reflected in high national dropout rates. Describing students as lazy, unmotivated, or not interested in school and learning fails to explain why some students flee, mentally and/or physically, from schools and otherwise resist learning opportunities. Focusing on students in isolation from the conditions of their life circumstances provides only a partial picture. This incomplete picture results in piecemeal, futile attempts at intervention.

The result of focusing on a child's perceived deficits, of blaming the victim, is that such students are considered less desirable, less salvageable than other students. Unfortunately, schools are unable to deal with students who deviate too much from the norm. Schools are made for students who are independent learners, those who excel, achieve, and fulfill the expectations of teachers and parents.

Students who underachieve are not born lazy or unmotivated. Many students *learn* to underachieve. For example, because of keen insight, an ability to note inconsistencies, and sensitivity to social injustices, many culturally diverse students are aware of the contradictions between their academic learning and their lived experiences. They grow critical and wary of the meritocratic ideology promoted in schools, and they are cognizant of race and class discrimination in schools and the larger society.

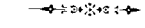
This constant feedback can demotivate culturally diverse students and wreak havoc on their desire to participate in a system perceived as unjust.

For decades educators and researchers have attempted to understand reasons for the high rate of academic failure among culturally diverse youth. Genetic characteristics, racial segregation and discrimination and/or cultural deprivation were offered as explanations for low achievement. Some educators viewed the school as a panacea for bringing about educational equity; others viewed it as not making a difference.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the cultural-difference hypothesis was presented as an alternative explanation for low achievement. The hypothesis attributed poor academic performance to differences between children's home learning methods and environments and those of the school. School culture was alien and often conflicted with the home culture. Two questions kept surfacing: How do students from different cultures prefer to learn, and how do they demonstrate what they have learned?

During the 1980s, educators began looking outside the schools to historical factors that formed and shaped cultural responses to schools. School environment was examined in relationship to the groups' experiences. Language and cultural differences could no longer be ignored. Teachers needed to focus on the in-school factor that could be changed as they interacted with their students.

I believe that people perceive the world in different ways, learn about the world in different ways, and demonstrate what they have learned in different ways. The approach to learning and the demonstration of what one has learned are influenced by the norms, values, and socialization practices of the culture in which the individual has been acculturated.



Writing a book is a little like putting a note in a bottle and casting it out to sea. You have no idea where or when it will land, who will receive it, or what impact it will have. You simply send it out with the hope that someone will read its message, and that one day you might receive a reply.

I put my message in this bottle not only to respond to commonly asked questions about cultural diversity but also to help you see how it impacts all of us. Many educators still look at cultural diversity and think of segre-

gation, economic inequality, racial violence, and racism. A colleague pointed to his own racially mixed community as an example. "Here was a place," he said, "where people of color and white people lived together as neighbors and yet there was little meaningful interaction across racial lines; no dialogue was taking place. No one understood cultural diversity." Change was not happening. As Gandhi once said, we need to "be the change we want to see happen." We are the change agents we have been waiting for.

I spoke about an image of a person putting a note in a bottle. I would like you to now consider a different image.

A young girl was walking along a beach. To her amazement she came upon thousands of starfish. Washed ashore by a storm, the starfish were dying in the hot sun. The girl began to toss starfish back into the sea, one by one. After a while a man approached her. "Little girl," he asked, "why are you doing this? There are thousands of starfish on the beach. You cannot possibly hope to make a difference!" The girl was discouraged and dropped the starfish from her hand. But a moment later, she bent down, picked up the starfish once again, and tossed it as far as she could into the sea. She turned back to the man. Smiling brightly she said, "I made a difference to that one." Inspired, he joined her. A crowd had gathered, and soon others joined in. Before long, there were hundreds of people tossing starfish back into the sea and calling out, "I made a difference to that one!" After awhile the calls subsided. The girl looked up. To her amazement, she saw no starfish on the beach. Each one had been tossed back into the sea.

As the story so beautifully illustrates, each of us has the power to make a difference, and collectively we can create a more just and peaceful society that honors, accepts, and respects cultural diversity.

Educators all across the country, most of whom are white, are teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, daily observing identity development in process, and are without an important interpretive framework to help them understand what is happening in their interactions with students.

Daily news reports tell us of the rising racial tensions in the United States. As our nation becomes more diverse, we need to be able to communicate across social and ethnic lines, but we seem less and less able to do so. We must be aware of what it is like to be a white person or a person of color in a race-conscious society.

My Latino, Asian, American Indian, Arab, and biracial students have taught me that they have a developing sense of racial/ethnic identity, too, and that all of us need to see our experiences reflected back to us.

James Baldwin wrote in his 1981 book, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, "Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced" (p. 15). Cultural diversity is a huge part of our lives. We must face the need for constructive action and meaningful social change.

The impact of cultural diversity begins early. Even in our preschool years, we are exposed to misinformation about people different from ourselves. The early information we receive about "others"—people racially, religiously, or socioeconomically different from ourselves—seldom comes as a result of firsthand information or experience. The secondhand information we do receive has often been distorted, shaped by cultural stereotypes, and left incomplete. The stereotypes we are exposed to become the foundation for adult prejudices that so many of us have.

Sometimes the assumptions we make about others come, not from what we have been told or what we have seen on television or in books, but rather from what we have *not* been told. The historical information about people of color leads young and old to make assumptions that may go unchallenged for a long time.

Stereotypes, omissions, and distortions all contribute to the development of prejudice, a preconceived judgment or opinion usually based on limited information. We teach what we were taught. The unexamined prejudices of the parents are passed on to the children. We must interrupt this cycle. We need to acknowledge that an important part of interrupting the cycle is constant reeducation and sharing what we learn with the next generation.

Who am I? Who am I now? Who was I before? Who will I become? The answer depends on who the world around me says that I am. How am I represented in the cultural images around me?

This book was developed with multiple audiences in mind: educators, counselors, parents, administrators, researchers, and practitioners. It considers the collaborative roles that families, educators, peers, and students themselves must play in promoting the academic, psychological, and socioemotional well-being of culturally diverse students.

Educators have a moral and ethical responsibility to help all children reach their potential in school. No child should sit on the margins, feeling

isolated from the rewards of educational challenge and learning. In addition, family-school collaboration is essential to students' academic success. Parents are the child's first teachers; teachers are the child's surrogate parents. Without family involvement, schools and children are less likely to succeed. Racially and culturally diverse students are at the greatest risk of being forgotten in our educational system.

Teachers and other school personnel must acknowledge and appreciate the changing demographics of students and respond by:

- Developing educational programs that are multicultural
- Changing curriculum and instruction to reflect and affirm diversity
- Understanding that racially and culturally diverse students have a number of battles to fight, including such social ills as poverty, racism, prejudice, and stereotypes that disrupt their motivation and inhibit equal and equitable learning opportunities
- Advocating for culturally diverse students

We must continue to be works in progress for a lifetime. We also need to study America's past from a comparative perspective. A broad range of groups has been selected: African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics, American Indians, Southeast Asians, new African immigrants, and Arab Americans. Together they help to explain general patterns in our society. Each has contributed to the making of the United States.

The purpose of this book is to provide current knowledge, practices, and beliefs that revolve around issues of diversity. We need to become aware of the needs, expectations, and rights of culturally diverse communities. Intolerance stems from lack of exposure to difference, and to fear. We need to confront intolerance based on stereotypes of youth and families who are culturally diverse. We can celebrate difference by providing an atmosphere where difference is nurtured rather than simply tolerated.

There is no universal formula for working with culturally diverse groups of people. Instead we must provide a framework in which we examine our own biases, attempt to confront them, and empower all concerned.

This book will explore the unique cultures of several groups of students. Who are the American Indian, African American, Hispanic/Latino American, Asian American, Hmong/Southeast Asian American, Arab American, and the new African immigrants? What is there about their family, concepts of honor, and social life that make them unique? What are the implications for education? What are the goals, concepts, and instructional planning needed for a curriculum that improves school performance? These questions must be addressed if we are to inform and assist those who may be planning a program to answer the cry of culturally diverse youth.

Culturally diverse students are educationally disadvantaged, and their educational needs are not being met. These students are failing in school, and the schools are failing these students. We must explore their rich and varied cultures and accept them for who they are. We must see the person, not the color of their skin.

Some of the information presented in this book has been accumulated through 40 years of personal experience in the classroom and more recently as an administrator in the charter school arena. The information presented in this book includes both identified sources from other writers as well as my experiences and those of my colleagues.

Chapter One

Immigration: Shattered Dreams

> The poorest, the most miserable came here because they had no future over there. To them, the streets of America were paved in gold. They had the American fever.
>
> —Andy Johnson, an immigrant

Long before immigrants from other nations arrived on its shores, American Indians called the North American continent their home. Today, the majority of Americans trace their family origins to a country other than the United States. Many of our forebears came to this country seeking greater freedom or an opportunity for a better life. Some of us can trace our roots to ancestors who came against their will and were forced to provide the labor that helped build our nation. Whether they were the native inhabitants of this continent or came from distant shores, the citizens of the United States brought to this nation a pride in their heritage, and distinctive cultural traditions and values.

The United States has been characterized as a "melting pot" in which all ingredients blend into a single dish. Likewise, the United States has been characterized as a "salad bowl" in which each ingredient preserves its own flavor and texture while contributing to the aggregate salad. In a speech at Stanford University in June of 2001, former president Jimmy Carter said it best: "We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

So, who is an "American"? How do you define an American? Does this definition matter? Why? How does the great cultural diversity of our population influence the life of our nation? How does commonality shape the nation? What are your questions?

Most of the population of the United States arrived here through immigration, but many people whose families have been here several generations don't know what it means to be an immigrant. They don't realize what it means to struggle for survival. Nearly half of the current population of the United States can trace their ancestors back to Ellis Island, the famous threshold of arrival in America, located in New York City's harbor. In the peak years of immigration, from 1900 to 1914, the Ellis Island immigration station processed five thousand people a day.

Now, both legal and illegal immigration are topics in the media as people from non-European countries arrive in increasing numbers.

Between 1820 and 1992, some 59,795,158 legal immigrants entered the United States. Most of them (37,400,991, or about 63%) were Europeans who belonged to many different religious, political, and cultural groups (U.S. Department of Justice, 1993).

The making of one society from so many different ethnic and national groups is one of the most amazing chapters in human history. Yet, social scientists, and therefore classroom teachers, have largely ignored the role of ethnicity in U.S. history and modern society. Educators and politicians have been preoccupied with theories of assimilation and the melting pot concept. A significant gap exists between cultural groups and the school curriculum.

Europeans began settling in America in significant numbers in the 1600s. The economic, social, and political conditions in Europe caused many of its inhabitants to cross the Atlantic searching for a new home. Most people were peasants who earned their living by farming. The peasants became landless or feared the loss of land and their place in the social order. They were attracted to the land. Without it, they were unable to make a living or maintain a sense of self.

The early settlers were a diverse group. Many were unable to pay for their passage and became indentured servants to make the journey. However, merchants, artisans, professionals, and laborers made up a small but significant part of the immigrants during the entire colonial period. Vagrants and convicts, who were unwanted by European nations, were also among the first settlers.

Once under way, the immigration movement produced forces that stimulated it. The letters settlers sent back to friends and relatives extolling the opportunities in America attracted more immigrants. Ship companies

eager to get passengers, and U.S. states and railroad companies who wanted to settle sparsely populated areas recruited even more immigrants. The rise of the industrial revolution and scientific farming also stimulated immigration to America.

Although all of these factors contributed to immigration, it was the search for a chance to earn a better living that caused most people to come to the United States. The tide of immigration rose and fell with economic conditions in America. Immigrants came for economic reasons.

Their passage from their homes to American port cities was hard and hazardous. The decision to leave their homes came after much thought. Often, only the threat of starvation or the loss of status compelled the immigrants to attempt the difficult journey.

The first step was to reach, usually by foot, a seaport city from which ships sailed to America. Many who made it to the port cities were tired and battered. Once there, they often had to wait weeks or months for a ship. The ship captains waited until the ships were full of goods and human cargo before they sailed. As each day went by during the long wait, the food the would-be immigrants had stored for the journey dwindled and funds were used to rent rooms.

Finally the day came when the ship sailed for America. The joy at the departure was short-lived. The conditions on board were depressing and harsh. To maximize his profits, the captain packed the people like sardines. Each family had an extremely small space and spent their time in these dark, crowded compartments. Diseases like dysentery, cholera, yellow fever, and smallpox were rampant on the vessels and took many lives. The families barely had enough food to last the journey.

The family structure was disrupted since the traditional role of the father as leader and master was not exercised owing to dependency on the crew. The transatlantic crossings severely strained family relationships.

The immigrants who survived the journey eventually landed at an American port city. The landing was eagerly awaited and celebrated. However, there were still more hurdles to overcome. They had to be checked and questioned by American immigration officials before they could travel freely in America. Wrong answers and poor health led to more questions, a stay in a hospital, or even a trip back to their home country. Early questions focused on the ability to work and on physical health. Later, questions relating to morals and political beliefs were added.

Many of the immigrants were broken both physically and financially when they walked off the boats. Some were the sole survivors of families who started out together. Broken and lonely, some found asylum in poorhouses. Many who had planned to settle elsewhere never left the port cities. Others traveled to, and then stayed in, cities like Milwaukee, Chicago, and St. Louis. Some found work on construction properties in the cities. Railroad construction and factory work became more available. The immigrants were paid low wages and were outrageously exploited by their employers. A few immigrants found their way west and became successful farmers or ranchers.

Urban ghettos developed in most of the larger cities. As the immigrants settled in these cities in the late 1800s, they found themselves living in blighted and dilapidated areas that became ethnic ghettos. When the upwardly mobile left the inner city, their old mansions were converted into multiple-family dwellings. Little was done to make these dwellings comfortable. Profit, not comfort, was what the slum landlord sought. When these neighborhoods were deserted by the old residents, they were also forsaken by the street cleaners and sanitation crews. The smells of garbage were pungent. The immigrants' habit of throwing garbage out of the windows made these communities even more unpleasant. Multistory apartments sprang up. These buildings were crowded and dirty. There were only two toilets on each floor in some buildings.

The immigrants lived for the day when their income would permit them to leave and join the exodus to the suburbs. As one ethnic group vacated the ghetto, another group moved in to replace it.

The early immigrant settlements were highly ethnically mixed. English, Scots-Irish, Germans, French Huguenots, Africans, and Jews were the earliest to arrive in America. Early in American colonial life, non-English groups began to be evaluated negatively. The New England colonies took steps to bar Roman Catholics. Scots-Irish and Germans were victims of English antagonism. The attitude that English culture was superior to all others profoundly shaped American life.

RACE AND THE IMMIGRANT EXPERIENCE

Race assumed a new meaning when the southern and eastern European groups attained acceptable levels of assimilation. All white ethnic groups

became one. Racial hostilities now focused on nonwhite groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans, Mexican Americans, and American Indians. Who are some of these early immigrants of color?

The Africans

The colonists of the early 17th century recognized various degrees of freedom and servitude. The duties and rights varied from person to person corresponding to rank and position. The nobles, gentlemen, and merchants occupied places near the top, with yeomen, traders, and artisans below. Still further down were women, children, apprentices, and servants, all subject to the master of the house that they lived in.

By the end of the seventeenth century the white servant who worked for a term and then became free and equal was replaced by the black slave who was a chattel, bound for the whole of his life and whose servitude passed on to his children.

Slave trade soared and the shipment of black slaves became more cruel and merciless as they were crammed by the masses into ships, passengers destined for lifelong labor, cruel treatment, prejudice, and ridicule.

The Mexicans

The conquest of and annexation of the Mexican territory in 1848 by the United States created a situation in which people of Mexican ancestry became subject to white domination. Like African Americans and American Indians, Mexican Americans were initially incorporated into U.S. society against their will. It was the general feeling among white settlers that whites and Mexicans were never meant to live together. Segregated schools, segregated housing, and employment discrimination were the result.

The Chinese

Chinese immigration to the United States was first documented in the early 1700s. This was followed by large-scale immigration in the mid-1800s spurred by the gold rush of the 1840s. These first immigrants were well received by the Americans. The Chinese were wealthy, successful

merchants and skilled artisans, fishermen, and hotel and restaurant owners renowned for their hard work. Shortly thereafter came a much larger group called "coolies," unskilled laborers usually working for little pay. The Chinese clustered into enclaves called Chinatowns. These enclaves were found nationwide. It is in these Chinatowns that the Chinese lived, worked, shopped, and socialized. They not only mined for gold but also took on jobs as cooks, peddlers, and storekeepers. They also took jobs that no one else wanted or that were considered too dirty. White prejudice and discrimination soon erupted.

The Japanese

The boom in the Hawaiian sugar industry in the 1870s and 1880s, in contrast to Japan's painful transition to a modern economy, which produced widespread unemployment, bankruptcies, and civil disorders, contributed to a much larger number of Japanese immigrants moving to Hawaii. After the takeover of the Hawaiian Islands by the United States, an even larger number of Japanese workers arrived on the shores of the continental United States. When they arrived, the Japanese gained their initial foothold in agriculture by working for lower wages than whites and then acquiring the land by paying more than whites were willing to pay.

On December 7, 1941, Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor was a traumatic landmark in the history of Japanese-American relations. After the attack, which occurred in the midst of peace talks, anti-Japanese feelings ran high, especially on the mainland. In Hawaii, where many Japanese Americans were killed, fewer than 1,500 were taken into custody as compared to over 100,000 who were interned on the mainland. The economic impact of this was devastating. Businesses built up over many years were liquidated in a matter of weeks with huge losses. Shattered careers were never resumed.

SUMMARY OF IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES

Immigration Time Line

1492	Columbus sails from Spain and makes landfall somewhere in the Caribbean, "stumbling" onto present-day America.
1565	Spanish explorers arrive and establish the settlement of St. Augustine in present-day Florida.
1587	English settlers establish the first English settlement in America, the Roanoke Colony, in what is now North Carolina.
1620	Immigration to New England begins with the arrival of Pilgrims, who establish the Plymouth Colony in present-day Massachusetts.
1638–1683	Swedes, Dutch, and Germans arrive along with the first Jewish immigrants.
1700s	Immigrants arrive from Europe in scattered numbers.
1800s	Immigrants from Europe arrive in large numbers.
1862	First restriction on immigration, against the Chinese.
1891	The Immigration and Naturalization Service is created.
1892	Ellis Island opens as a screening station for incoming immigrants.
1921	An immigration quota system is introduced.
1948	The Displaced Persons Act is introduced, allowing people to immigrate if they are driven from their homes by disaster or war.
1990	The Immigration Act of 1990 sets an annual ceiling for the number of immigrants allowed to enter the United States each year.
1995	A maximum of 675,000 people are allowed to enter the United States each year. Preference is shown to the relatives of U.S. citizens, refugees, and people with skills needed in the United States. There is no limit on refugees and immediate family members of those immigrants coming to the country.

Reasons for Immigration

In the early years of settling America (1600–1830) immigrants arrived seeking political freedom, religious freedom, economic opportunities (better life, better job, and more money), family reunification, adventure, a new way of life, and sheer survival.

From 1830 to 1890 land was plentiful and cheap. Jobs were abundant

owing to industrialization and urbanization. Political and religious freedom also remained important to many immigrants.

From 1890 to 1924, people arrived for religious freedom (Jewish families), employment opportunities (Italians and Asians), and to escape persecution (Russians). America was touted as the "land of opportunity."

From 1924 to the present the main reason for immigration has been economic opportunity. Professional people from the Philippines (doctors and nurses) and India (doctors, engineers, and scientists) were abundant. Wars, revolutions, and political unrest also brought immigrants from Bosnia, Ethiopia, Iraq, Rwanda, Vietnam, Somalia, and Liberia. Low wages, unemployment, poverty, and the communist takeover of Cuba in 1959 brought many others.

Today the largest groups of immigrants come from Mexico, the Philippines, Vietnam, the Dominican Republic, China, India, Cuba, El Salvador, Jamaica, Haiti, South Korea, and Ukraine. A new wave of Southeast Asians, Arabs, and Africans must also be acknowledged.

Many new arrivals first settle in a community made up of people from their native land or even native village. They keep their old customs and acquire limited knowledge of their new country's language, culture, and values. In time, many immigrants, especially the children, assimilate.

Keep in mind that most people find it very hard to uproot themselves from their native land, no matter what the circumstances, and move to a strange country. But, throughout history, countless millions of people have done so.

Methods of Transportation/Ports of Arrival

From the 1600s to 1830, African Americans came over on ships where they were wedged into holds so tightly that they could hardly move. Vessels of 100 to 200 tons often carried 400 to 500 African slaves, as well as the crew and the provisions. They were cooped up for weeks, lived on meager rations, and were deprived of fresh air. This caused many deaths among the captives.

From 1830 to 1890 most immigrants arrived through the port of New York City. The ships would leave passengers at wharves to fend for themselves. Some of the problems that these newcomers faced were posed by

con men, thieves, and thugs. Eventually all immigrants passed through Ellis Island.

From 1890 to 1924 Angel Island in San Francisco and the piers of Seattle were ports for Asians arriving on our shores. Presently most arrive by plane at various entry points.

Process for Entering the United States

From 1607 to 1830, slaves or indentured servants were under the charge of a ship captain for the cost of their passage. Once in New York City or some other East Coast port city, slaves were sold and indentured servants had to work ten years to redeem themselves for their passage.

Prior to 1855 the immigrants were simply left at the wharf. The public feared the diseases many new immigrants brought, and they were ostracized by society in general. Castle Garden, in New York City, became an immigration receiving center so that the government could keep track of the newcomers. Clerks recorded the names, nationalities, and destinations of the immigrants. Physicians gave routine checkups and physical examinations to ensure that the immigrants were healthy.

From 1892 to 1924 all immigrants entered through Ellis Island or Angel Island. They were tested for diseases, had to have documents from their home country, had to be mentally fit, and had to be ready to adapt to life in the United States. This process continued throughout the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s.

In 1962 all commercial flights from Cuba to the United States were suspended. Nonetheless, 50,000 Cubans entered between 1962 and 1965. Most Cubans sailed secretly from Cuba in small boats. Between 1966 and 1973 the United States and the Cuban government set up an airlift between Cuba and Miami that brought 250,000 Cubans into the United States. Until 1994 the United States welcomed Cuban immigrants as victims of an oppressive regime. In 1994 thousands of Cubans set sail for southern Florida on small boats and rafts to escape oppression and poverty in Cuba. Soon after the influx began, President Clinton announced that the United States would not accept any more refugees. This policy was designed to avoid the cost of settling large numbers of refugees in Florida.

After the Vietnam War ended, a huge influx of refugees once again arrived from Southeast Asia and continues to this day.

Destinations/Places Where Immigrants Settled

From the 1600s to the 1890s European immigrants settled in frontier areas and became farmers or ranchers. Cargoes of African slaves were sent to Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Maryland. The development of the plantation system created a demand for slave labor. Other immigrants remained in the ports where they arrived. Most were too poor to move inland. By 1950, the Irish made up more than half the population of Boston and New York City.

From 1890 to 1924 immigrants settled in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, New York City, and Milwaukee. Presently nearly two-thirds of all Cuban Americans live in Miami. Chinese and Japanese still settle on the West Coast or in Hawaii. Many Southeast Asians have settled in St. Paul, Minnesota; Seattle; and various California cities. The Arab newcomers settled around Detroit and more recently in Minneapolis–St. Paul.

Treatment/Reception by Other Americans

From the 1600s to 1860 African slaves were not treated as equals and often were not even treated like human beings. European whites were settling the country and setting the trend.

From 1830 to 1890 the Irish, in their large numbers, were looked upon as a drain on society. They took jobs away from the general public. Many help-wanted ads included the phrase "Irish need not apply."

From 1890 to 1924 immigrant groups formed their own communities and stayed close to each other because of lack of respect from established Americans.

From the 1930s to the present, immigrants have been willing to work for virtually nothing, and therefore have been said to be taking jobs away from average Americans who were, and are, unwilling to work for such low fees. Also, most early immigrants who came here wanted to assimilate as quickly as possible. They wanted to become American, whatever that meant. It was difficult for Asians to assimilate, and therefore they were discriminated against in many areas. They were paid one-third less than whites. They spent 11-hour working days in sweat shops with horrible conditions. During the late 1800s and the early 1900s, the Chinese would work harder for less and formed their own businesses while white American businesses were unable to compete.

Opportunities for Success

African slaves had no opportunities for education or social mobility. Industrialization caused people to leave agriculture and gravitate toward work in industry. After the Civil War, immigrants were enlisted in what became known as the American industrial army. The Homestead Act of 1862 has been called one of the most important pieces of legislation in the history of the United States. This act turned over vast amounts of the public domain to private citizens. An estimated 10% of U.S. land was claimed and settled under this act. A homesteader only had to be the head of a household and at least 21 years of age to claim a 160-acre parcel of land. Settlers from all walks of life, including newly arrived immigrants, farmers without land of their own from the East, single women, and former slaves, came to meet the challenge of developing this free land. The result was westward movement.

From 1890 to 1924 employment was available in grocery stores, dry-cleaning shops, newsstands, machine shops, and the garment industry. The living conditions were poor and the immigrants lived in slum dwellings. Children received an education, parents and elders received none. Racism took over, and social mobility was nonexistent. Most immigrants had little or no political representation.

From 1968 to the present immigrants have the same opportunity as do native-born Americans to find work. Many day laborers who do not speak English are still able to work for English-speaking business/construction owners, and others find work in their cultural communities.

Assimilation? To What Degree?

Many African Americans in the United States have ancestors who were slaves. They were possessions. They had no choice but to assimilate into American culture. They did not have a chance to go back to Africa, and generations later, when they did have the chance, most were so firmly rooted in American society that they had no desire to do so.

Those immigrants who found it difficult to assimilate were discriminated against because of their culture and traditions. Many immigrants were able to preserve some of their culture and still become Americanized. Other immigrants turned their backs on their own culture and became fully Americanized.

Legal Versus Illegal Immigration and Laws Restricting Immigration

No laws were in place restricting immigration until 1862 when a law restricting Chinese immigration was passed. The Chinese Exclusion Act suspended the entry of Chinese laborers. A law was passed in 1875 prohibiting prostitutes and felons from entering the United States. In the 1880s laws were passed enacting restrictions for those mentally ill or insane, the mentally handicapped, and people who needed public assistance and care. In the 1890s convicts, polygamists, and people suffering from diseases of any sort were excluded. The early 1900s brought quotas affecting Asians, Russians, Middle Easterners, and Pacific Islanders. "America must be kept American," said President Calvin Coolidge when he signed the Immigration Quota Law in 1924.

Laws are pending that will continue to restrict legal immigrants for years to come. Under some of these pending proposals, parents, adult children, and brothers and sisters of U.S. citizens could no longer immigrate at all. Spouses and children of lawful, permanent residents would be limited to 10,000 visas per year. Refugees would be barred in all but extraordinary circumstances. Illegal immigrants would be jailed, prosecuted, and deported.

CURRENT TRENDS

America's changing ethnic and racial makeup will profoundly transform the nation's regional landscape for the next few decades. What looks like a diversified melting pot at the national level takes on a dramatically different look if you zoom in on specific regions and metropolitan areas. Immigrants are settling in New York City, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, Miami, Washington, D.C., Dallas–Fort Worth, and Minneapolis–St. Paul. For example, a new wave of immigrants is arriving in Minne-

apolis–St. Paul. Fifteen thousand Southeast Asian refugees, mostly Hmong, still living in a Thai camp, have a shot at U.S. resettlement. While the past waves of Hmong refugees received most of their support through social service agencies, this next wave will depend heavily on relatives, many of whom are struggling to make ends meet. American relatives worry about having more mouths to feed. Sometimes only one family member is working.

Those who come to Minnesota and other states will not find churches as their main benefactors as earlier refugees did. Instead relatives will give the newcomers a place to live, drive them to get medical checkups, enroll the children in school, and make sure they have access to social services and job training.

Each refugee will get $400 in federal money to buy food and clothing. Like their predecessors, the newest arrivals will also be eligible to apply for welfare benefits that now include work-participation requirements (*Minneapolis Star Tribune*, March 2004). The refugees' transition to a new culture will be full of challenges, including language barriers, financial worries, and general culture shock. The schools will be a critical element in helping these and all immigrants in the coming years.

Diverging migration patterns have unevenly distributed racial and ethnic diversity in America's regions. New Mexico, Hawaii, and California stand out as the nation's first states with a nonwhite majority. At the same time, in 15 states culturally diverse groups account for less than 15% of the population.

Arriving immigrants tend to cluster geographically because destination communities provide them with a comfort zone of familiarity. Ethnic enclaves in New York City and Los Angeles contain already established institutions (churches, community centers, stores, neighbors) that make new arrivals feel at home and give them social and economic support. Hispanic immigrants are flocking to Texas, California, Florida, New York, Illinois, and New Jersey. Asian patterns are similar, with new arrivals also going to California, New York, Illinois, Texas, and Washington, D.C. Recent racial and ethnic immigrant patterns show that America has a long way to go before it becomes a coast-to-coast melting pot, with racial and ethnic groups spread evenly across the land.

We can also look at immigration in terms of racism. Globalization not only has created enormous economic hardships through the increasing

gap between the so-called Third World and the First World, but it has also given rise to unprecedented immigration. In the past few years, for the first time in history, more than 100 million people immigrated to different parts of the world. This exponential growth in immigration has given rise to a dramatic increase in racism. In France, the ultraright National Front Party has unleashed an incessant attack on immigrants, especially Muslims from the former French colonies. In Germany, there has been a significant increase in neo-Nazi groups that have been responsible for many bomb attacks against Turks and Greeks. In the United States we are witnessing manifestations of racism that range from referenda in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts making it a crime to teach content areas in a language other than English, to the present assault on affirmative action.

English teachers (sometimes unknowingly) are complicit with structures of racism in their eagerness to "save" students from their non-English-speaking status. In other words, English teachers need to understand that while the acquisition of English can empower non-English-speakers, it can also become a weapon that can shame, humiliate, and colonize.

Racism and power intertwine at every level of social interaction, from the classroom to the job site, from the streets to the corridors of government. An understanding of racism helps us comprehend how power functions and reveals embedded hierarchies of privilege that limit the life chances of so many. Ultimately, racism limits the democratic potential that is the core promise of American life. We tend to forget what Franklin D. Roosevelt said during a state of the union speech in 1936: "Remember, remember always, that all of us are descended from immigrants."

IMMIGRATION: THE STORIES OF THE PEOPLE

The inscription on the Statue of Liberty reads:

> Give me your tired, your poor
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
> Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed, to me:
> I lift my lamp beside the golden door. (Emma Lazarus)

When I came to the United States for the first time it was very hard for me to cross the border. I spent two weeks in Tijuana trying to cross. I finally was allowed into the United States, got my resident card, and hope to get my citizenship soon. I have a job and am studying to get a better job to support my family. I still miss Mexico, but here is better. (Remigio)

My name is Tina Duong. I come from Vietnam. I came from a big house and my family lived together and owned a business. After 1975 we fled to Malaysia by boat. We lived in a refugee camp for two years where we were always hungry. We did not have enough rice or meat and vegetables. Two of my children died because we had no medicine. Finally, we were sponsored to come to the United States. We spent an additional six months in the Philippines to study English. Once in America we had more problems. I could not use the oven, turn on the faucet, and shower or vacuum the floor because I had never seen these things. I overcame the tough times and learned. I succeeded in life. (Tina)

My name is Linda Thong. I was born in Laos. My father died in the war. After the war I fled to Thailand on a boat so small it could barely hold the 55 people on it. We went for nine days with no food, was set upon by pirates who stole our jewelry and clothes and raped the women. I was lucky because my short hair and loose clothing made me look like a man. They took my daughter and threw her into the sea. I could not save her. We finally made it to Thailand. From there we came to the United States where we had no clothes or money and slept on the floor for three months. We found an apartment with one bedroom for nine people. My husband and I finally save $5,000 to start a small business. I thank God very very much for my family have freedom. (Linda)

My name is Long Vang and I was born in Laos. My father was shot by the Communists as I was forced to watch. I ran and joined people who lived in the mountains and fought for freedom. We fought one day and ate the next. My gun was my only friend. I was 12 years old. I left the mountains and found the Mekong River. I cut a tree and built a small boat just

for me. The Thai soldiers found me and took me to a camp where I lived for five years. I never thought to come to America. I wanted to go back home. Finally I realized that I could never go home. I came to America. I have found a new home. (Long Vang)

I was born in Somalia. I was traumatized by the lack of food, draught, no water, and wars. I escaped to the United States and I still was scared. I could not find a job or a place to live. I stayed on the streets finding food in the garbage cans behind stores. Then someone took me in and helped me to live again. I am in school and struggling to learn English. I will make it. My life is changing. I will never go back. (Hihib)

Let's not close the doors to America. Unless you've had to flee your home because of civil war, or poverty, or because it is not safe where you live, you can't know what it is like. You would try to run away, too, if it meant a better life for your family. (Palestinian immigrant)

Immigrants remain distinct because of cultural differences and the circumstances under which they arrived here. Our newest immigrants, the Hmong, are viewed as a model. Considered backward hill people in their home territory, Minnesota's Hmong transplants have excelled at organizing, particularly on the political front. Two Hmong Minnesota legislators are younger than 35. The groups currently arriving from a Thailand refugee camp are stepping into a built-in support network. Many are refugees of war who are eager to learn, trusting, industrious, worried, unsettled, and hardworking people who need a place to heal. Because of their status as refugees and American allies during the Vietnam War, many are embraced with open arms.

However, for most Somalis, also legal refugees, the echo of the 1993 U.S. raid on Somalia, followed by the attacks of 9/11 and increased suspicion toward Islam, has made their reception less warm.

Hispanics from Mexico, Central America, and South America have the longest history of migration to the United States. In some areas, families can count back four or five generations to their immigrant ancestors. More

recent Hispanic arrivals include many undocumented workers (known to many by the more negative term "illegal aliens").

The strength each of the immigrant groups brings to this country is their abiding loyalty to their ethnicity and culture. In turn, the fabric of American life has been enriched and strengthened by our immigrant population.