Table of Contents Volume 9 Number 2 Summer-Fall, 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Debating United States Immigration Policy</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background to the Immigration Debate by Alan Singer</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Immigration Lawyer Discusses Legal Issues by Linda Nanos</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Teacher Believes Americans are Paying the Price by Kellyann Dooley</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Advocate Discusses Legal Rights for Immigrants by Tara Keenan-Thomson</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An Immigrants Describes Her Experience by Atia Pasha</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Respond to the Immigration Debate</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morristown, NJ Divided Over Undocumented Immigrants</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Long Island Attitudes Towards Immigrants Change</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day-Laborers in Farmingville, New York</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigrant Advocacy Groups by Elizabeth Acevedo Moncayo</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Debate and DBQ by Alan Shapiro</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigration and American History</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Policy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow by John W. Chambers and Arlene L. Gardner</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration Stories from Ellis Island’s Hospitals by Claudia Ocello and John Harlan Warren</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immigration and the “Consumption” of a Nation by Andrea Maxwell</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Immigration to the United States by Thomas O’Connor and Shannon Alexander</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBQ – The Jewish Immigrant Experience in America, 1880-1920 by Bill Hendrick</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Italian Immigration to the United States by Michelle Geluso</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Why did so many Italians come to South Jersey? by Dana Lewisohn, Joanne Mariani, Maryann Savino et al</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The West Indians: A Century of Living in New York by Joyce Toney</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migration from El Salvador to the United States by Matthew Crichton</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Immigrant Stories</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louis Rosenbaum: Uncovering My Grandfather’s Story by Carolyn Herbst</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badria Mahdy Mabrouk: From Egypt to the United States by Maram Mabrouk</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oscar Palomo: From Guatemala to the United States by William Palomo</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Cournane: Life in Ireland, England, and America by Michael Mullervy</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Ideas for Immigration History</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using a DBQ to Teach about Immigration in Elementary Classrooms by Kevin Sheehan et al</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral History Interview Project on Immigration by Carolyn Herbst</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discovering the Unsung Heroes of Haiti by Linda Trimigliozzi</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle School Immigration Museum</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching about Immigration Using Activities and Picture Books by Jeannette Balantic, Jonie Kipling et al</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Immigrant in American Film by Norman Markowitz</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reviews:</strong> New York and Slavery, Time to Teach the Truth by William L. Katz, Marlene Munn-Joseph et al</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introducing the Authors</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Science Docket

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Social Science Docket 1 Summer-Fall 2009
Putting Immigration at the Center of the U.S. History Curriculum
by John Gunn

The study of immigration in a high school United States history course provides teachers a wonderful opportunity to connect a vital contemporary issue to longstanding conflicts that are of essential importance in American history. It also serves as useful conceptual frame for a semester-long elective in U.S. history because of its direct and essential connection to issues of race, ethnicity, class, and citizenship. These issues are of central importance for student understanding of contemporary American society. While not without its often and usually horrible stops and starts, a charitable interpretation of American history can be seen as one of increased recognition of the rights and contributions of those who for historical reasons have been excluded from legal and social recognition as equal partners and contributors to American society.

While the achievements of a more inclusive society should be celebrated the concerted and ongoing struggle of minority peoples and their allies in the majority culture for inclusion should be emphasized through the selection of source material. Unfortunately, the incorporation of immigrants into American society has also caused profound conflicts or dilemmas over issues of legality and ethics that are not easily resolved in a democratic society. It is recommended that students be provided an opportunity to reflect on these dilemmas in the later units described below after the overarching themes.

Overarching Themes

The history of immigration into the United States can be seen as a struggle for “naturalization,” the attainment of citizen rights, by peoples of diverse heritages. The naturalization of immigrants poses for Americans the essential question of the nation’s conception of citizenship. Borrowing from Eric Foner, the question for Americans becomes: Should citizenship be open to all who reside within the United States and based upon “shared political institutions and values” or should it be reserved for those with a shared ethnic and linguistic heritage?

U.S. History and the history of immigration in the United States can be seen as process of struggle over the basis of citizenship with increasing universalization of core American rights as the proper basis of citizenship over ethic and linguistic heritage. In the U.S. because of race-based slavery, the integration of immigrants into the citizenry on the basis of universalistic norms has been compromised by the legacy of legalized discrimination.

With the extension of legal rights and citizenship there has been increasing recognition of the cultural and linguistic contributions of non-Western European peoples to the nation. Because of the legacy of racism deriving from the prolonged practice of slavery, and an ethnocentrism not uncommon to all peoples, the recognition of immigrants’ cultural contributions and the acceptance of difference in American society have often been resisted. This resistance has taken forms such as “nativism” and “Americanization” and resulted in struggles to conceive of a culturally integrated or diverse community. This gives rise to metaphorical constructs such as “the melting pot” or “mosaic.”

While America has been and continues to be a haven for refugees of religious and political persecution, immigration to the United States has been historically tied to immigrants’ pursuit of economic opportunities. The vast majority of immigrants have sought out manual and unskilled work. This has fueled economic growth in this country and had the effect of pushing down wages for unskilled workers already present. Job competition has led in different periods of U.S. history to calls for limitations on immigration by the labor movement, as well as the encouragement of immigration by employers.

The interaction of these factors has contributed to a tendency of Americans to perceive themselves as a divided polity, rather than as a unified people. This perception may contribute to the often-identified ambivalence of the citizenry to allocate public expenditures to social spending. This ambivalence has also contributed to the ongoing cultural conflicts and political paralysis over current immigration policy.

Unit Topics for Student Discovery

Having identified overarching themes, the critical factor becomes the selection of historical cases to provide students with opportunities to develop concepts and to form generalizations. Listed below are a selection of possible cases and discussions of the possible contributions these cases might make to students’ understanding of immigration and the above-identified overarching themes. The first two cases are intended to facilitate student empathy, engagement
with the study of immigration as well as beginning the process of building conceptual frames for understanding the role of immigration in U.S. history. Each case study begins with an essential question that guides student inquiry. However, depending on students’ interests other essential questions might be substituted if the teacher keeps in mind the underlying understanding goals or generalizations.

1. Why did your family settle in the United States? This unit is intended to foster student engagement with the study of immigration. Students are asked to interview family members to learn about their family’s history of immigration to the United States. Students can do their best to identify when and why their family came to the U.S. They can research conditions in their prior homeland at the time of their emigration. The classic distinction between push and pull factors can be introduced and applied by students to their own family history. Students’ can explore family experiences and compare them with each other. This exploration can be a bit sensitive due to economic difficulties, discrimination, and cultural conflict. Some students may not have immediate family members to interview. In that case, students can explore the reasons people from their nation of origin emigrated to the United States. Students can look for commonalities across their families and begin to form generalizations about the immigrant experience. As a class they can aggregate data and create charts and tables showing countries of origin and reasons families emigrated. The aggregation of data can spur further inquiry. Students might wonder why most of their ancestors come from certain parts of the world. They might notice common reasons for their families coming to the United States.

2. What are the current issues about immigration? The purpose of this unit is to focus student attention on the current immigration debate in the United States. Students can interview members of their neighborhood and local elected representatives about their feelings on immigration and its impact on their community. They can identify immigrant populations living in their communities and gather demographic data. They can search the websites of The New York Times and local papers for archived news stories of raids by federal and local authorities on work places and the homes of suspected “undocumented immigrants.” They can study news stories about the border area with Mexico. Students can identify conflicts over immigration policy, including conflicts between the Federal government and local authorities, civil rights issues and problems faced by legal residents or citizens who are relatives of undocumented workers. They can explore the effects of the Patriot Act on immigrants’ rights and visit websites of different public interest groups who have positions on immigration, including labor unions. Students can also explore the use of the terms “undocumented” and “illegal” by different groups. Through this process of discovery students begin to build a conception of the state of immigration in the U.S. as well as develop concepts and generalizations that will serve them in subsequent studies of history. Most importantly, they can also identify questions for further inquiry.

3. How have immigrants and other marginalized people been treated in the United States? Students explore how their family’s experience and the experiences of contemporary immigrants compare with those of other groups. Students examine the experience of enslaved Africans as “involuntary” immigrants as well as other groups such as the Irish, Chinese, Eastern and Southern Europeans, Southern Blacks during the Great Migration, and Latin Americans. These case studies can be allocated to small groups for subsequent sharing with full classes. Of critical importance to facilitate comparisons is that each group asks similar questions. Student teams should be provided with diverse primary sources including relevant legal documents, evidence of the immigrant group’s geographic dispersal, economic conditions, and efforts made by immigrants to resist discrimination. The nature of stereotyping and its effects on the immigrant population should also be explored. As a final project students can share what they learned about their immigrant group and the class can aggregate information to form generalizations that address the overarching themes. Finally, given the preponderance of immigrants and undocumented workers from Mexico in the United States today, the unique situation created by the long border with Mexico, the history of the “Bracero” program, and NAFTA, it is recommended that all students undertake a study of the Mexican immigration. A main focus of this historical treatment is to develop generalizations about the cultural perception of immigrants and their economic status.

4. How has the United States government treated immigrants? Students explore the evolution of laws using racial and national categorization to restrict immigration and naturalization. Beginning with
legislation in 1790, Congress established rules for naturalization of foreign-born applicants. Among other conditions, the 1790 law required that naturalized foreigners be “free white persons.” Racial restrictions on naturalization remained in force until 1952. Laws to explore include the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 (which limited Chinese immigration as well as naturalization); the 1898 Supreme Court decision (U.S. v. Wong Kim Ark) that clarified that the 14th amendment’s guarantee of citizenship rights to native-born children of groups such as the Chinese that had been denied naturalization rights; the Immigration Service’s “List of Races or Peoples” which they used to determine who gained entry to the United States at Ellis Island in the 1890s; the National Origins Act of 1924 which established quotas for each European nationality and reduced the number of Eastern and Southern European immigrants; and the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 that replaced the national quota system with a preference system that favored the reunification of families and highly skilled professionals.

5. How has immigration shaped the United States?
   Students explore the demographics of immigration, including the changing composition of states with “minority” majorities, struggles over the use of languages other than English, and questions about crime, national security, civil rights, and immigration. Students should be exposed to the argument that the influx of immigrants lowers wages for unskilled American workers and makes it possible for employers to pay wages that American workers find unacceptable. Students should explore the notion of “downward assimilation,” for example, second generation immigrants are more likely than their first generation parents to engage in criminal behavior as social factors in this country undermine traditional cultural values. In this next to last unit, students discuss the value tensions inherent in contemporary debates on immigration. They examine why many American citizens consider “amnesty” for “illegal aliens” unfair to the many immigrants who entered the country legally. This promotes discussion of the nature of the law and whether or not citizens are obligated to adhere to laws they consider unjust. Given the effect of increased competition for low wage jobs, what is the caring response of citizens to the current immigration debate? Students may also wish to speculate on the diminished nature of national sovereignty posed by unregulated migration.

6. What should be done about immigration today?
   Drawing on the knowledge and skills developed during the previous units, students articulate a position on proposed immigration legislation. For example, the Save Act is legislation that was introduced in the House of Representatives by Brain Bilbray, Republican of California and Heath Shuler, Democrat of North Carolina. It proposed, “to dramatically reduce the number of illegal aliens in the United States through stepped-up enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.” It provided for more border patrol and Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents and additional federal judges to hear cases against people who smuggle drugs and humans. Students decide whether or not they support the Save Act or other immigration reform proposals. Groups of students can defend divergent positions on the issue of immigration in the United States today, discuss their views with parents and the community, disseminate them through the media, and present them to elected officials.

GILES R. WRIGHT (1936-2009) – IN MEMORIAM
   Edited from remarks by Bernard Bush, Executive Director, New Jersey Historical Commission, 1969-1991
   Giles Wright arrived at the New Jersey Historical Commission in 1979. He was hired to work in the field of ethnic history and he produced the Commission's series of publications on the experiences of immigrants to New Jersey. He was already on the scene when the late Assemblywoman Mildred Barry Garvin joined the Commission and introduced legislation to create the African-American History Program was established in the early 1980s. Giles was in a position to help in planning and drafting the law, in gathering support for its passage and funding, and in formulating the program's goals and activities. It was a natural progression for him to be appointed director of what we believed to be the nation's first official state program in African-American history. For the next quarter century he was the heart and soul of everything that the new program accomplished. Giles Wright was not content to do research, writing and teaching about African-American history; he lived it as an active participant in his community, and in the larger arena of public life in our state. Illuminating the past and contributing to the present and future were for him complementary parts of a whole life. While we mourn the passing of this fine man, we have cause to celebrate a life so well lived.
Debating United States Immigration Policy

In November 2007, the Hofstra University Social Studies and English Educators programs hosted a forum on contemporary immigration policy and divisions in the United States. Speeches included a background discussion of the recent history of immigration by Alan Singer, Hofstra University, and statements by Linda Nanos, a long time practitioner of immigration law who is chair of the Immigration Law Committee for the Nassau County Bar Association, Tara Keenan-Thomson, Executive Director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, Nassau Chapter, an organization that advocates for legal rights for immigrants, and local teachers, Kellyann Dooley, West Hempstead High School, who believes Americans are paying a heavy price for illegal immigration, and Atia Pasha, Crescent High School, who shares her experiences as an immigrant from Pakistan.

Background to the Immigration Debate

by Alan Singer

I like to be the rabble-rouser when I speak or write, but in this case I find myself in the unaccustomed position of being the historian providing background facts for consideration. I will have to leave the rabble-rousing to the other papers.

The 1980s and 1990s brought New York City and its metropolitan area its greatest wave of immigration since the 1920s. The numbers are staggering. By 1993, a third of New York City’s residents were immigrants and another 20 percent were children born in the United States of immigrant parents. For the 2000 census, demographers counted 2.9 million immigrant residents in New York City. By 2005, the estimated number of immigrants had risen to 3.2 million people. Between 2000 and 2005, six of ten new babies born in the city had at least one foreign-born parent.

The newest New Yorkers came from all over the world. During the 1980s and 1990s, more than half were from the Caribbean and Asia. Almost a fourth were from Europe, especially from countries in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Approximately 20 percent come from the Dominican Republic. During the early years of the twenty-first century, the fastest growing immigrant groups were Mexicans, Guyanese, and Bangladeshis. New York City is home to over fifty percent of Dominican-born immigrants living in the United States and 45 percent of this country’s Bangladeshis. New arrivals also include people from Senegal, Nigeria, Egypt, Guatemala, China, the Middle East, Korea, and Ireland.

A similar “immigration” dynamic is underway in the other counties that make up the tri-state metropolitan region. In Hudson, Passaic, Union, Middlesex, Bergen, and Essex in New Jersey, and Westchester in New York, immigrants account for more than one-fifth of the populations. Some immigrant groups, especially Jamaicans and Haitians, are now bypassing the city altogether and settling directly in nearby suburban and urban communities.

During the last twenty-five years, tens of thousands more immigrants arrived in New York City without official documentation. Officials estimate that almost 20 percent of the city’s immigrant population does not have legal resident status. Figures on legal status vary from group to group. According to a Pew Hispanic Center report, since 1990, 80 to 85 percent of all Mexican immigration to the United States has been undocumented. Amongst other immigrant groups, the great majority entered this country legally. Mexicans are currently the fifth largest immigrant group in the city with a population that quadrupled from approximately 32,000 people in 1990 to over 122,000 in 2000. However, because of the large number of undocumented immigrants in the city’s Mexican population, there may have been as many as 200,000 Mexicans here in 2000.

In recent years, two-thirds of all new immigrants in New York City settled in either Brooklyn or Queens. In Brooklyn, Crown Heights and East Flatbush remain the “co-capitals” of Caribbean people living in the United States; there is a thriving Chinatown and a Mexican community in Sunset Park; Brighton Beach is known as “Little Odessa” because of immigrants from Russia; the streets near the intersection of Coney Island and Foster Avenues are lined with stores selling Indian and Pakistani food; and African shops are sprouting up on Fulton Street in Fort Greene. New immigrant communities add to the cultural diversity of New York City and contribute to its economic
growth. They replaced residents who died or moved out of the city, filled housing vacancies, revitalized small businesses, and account for over 40 percent of the city’s work force.

There is no typical New York metropolitan area immigrant. Living conditions vary widely between groups. Just over one in four foreign-born Dominicans has completed high school. Only 30 percent speak English very well. As a result, nearly a third live in poverty compared with a citywide poverty rate of 21 percent. At the other end of the economic spectrum, the median household income for Filipinos is $70,500, the highest of any immigrant group. Gender ratios vary widely by immigrant group, reflecting conditions at home prior to migration and whether the move was seen as permanent. There are only sixty Filipino men for every one hundred Filipino women in New York City. On the other hand, there are one hundred and sixty Pakistani men for every one hundred Pakistani women.

In most ways, the newest arrivals are similar to earlier waves of immigrants to the United States. They experience both a push and a pull – something that drove them to leave their original homeland and something that brought them to this country. Haitian, Central American, and Chinese immigrants often seek political freedom. Jamaicans, Dominicans, and Koreans search for economic opportunities. Like earlier Italian and Slavic immigrants, many Caribbean and Latino people travel back and forth between the United States and their original homelands. On the other hand, immigrants from China, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union rarely return to their countries of origin.

At many times in United States history, there was conflict between new immigrants and people from earlier arriving groups. Often they competed for the same jobs and housing or set up small businesses in the same neighborhoods. Today, with a decline in industrial jobs in New York and the United States, economic competition between immigrants and “old-timers” can be intense. In the New York metropolitan region, economic rivalry between established groups and recent immigrants has led to tension between African Americans and Asians and between Puerto Rican and Dominican communities.

While earlier immigrants, especially the Irish, Italians, and Jews, faced economic and religious discrimination, the newest wave of immigrants face additional problems. The United States has a long and bitter history of racial discrimination and the newest immigrants are largely non-European and non-white. Many are Islamic and have faced intense scrutiny since September 11, 2001 because of continuing U.S. military involvement in the Middle East. Economic competition and religious and racial discrimination have contributed to calls to restrict the number of people who can legally enter the U.S.

In response to anti-immigrant feelings, record numbers of immigrants living in New York City and other parts of the country have decided to become citizens. Between October 1, 1995 and September 30, 1996, nearly 1.2 million people were naturalized. This shattered the previous record of 445,853 set the year before. In the fall of 1996, the large number of applications for citizenship caused long delays in processing. The push for citizenship was spurred by discriminatory rules included in the 1996 federal welfare bill. Although non-citizens make up only five percent of welfare recipients, they received forty percent of the cuts. Congress and a number of states also debated laws that would limit the number of new immigrants, make it easier to find and expel undocumented immigrants, and penalize legal immigrants who are not citizens. In recent years there was another surge in the number of legal immigrants seeking to become U.S. citizens. It was prompted by imminent increases in fees to process naturalization applications, citizenship drives across the country, and new feelings of insecurity among immigrants. The number of new naturalized citizens rose from 463,000 in 2003 to 702,000 in 2006.

One unexpected result of anti-immigrant hostility is a spurt in political activism among legal immigrants and new citizens. Tens of thousands of Latino immigrants have marched in Washington DC, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles protesting against anti-immigrant and anti-Hispanic policies. Islamic communities have mobilized against ethnic profiling. In addition, new immigrants have emerged as a crucial voting block in a number of election districts. As increasing numbers of new immigrants become citizens, politicians will be unable to ignore their needs. This should improve the climate for school funding, increase the number of voters who oppose cuts in social services, and increase the political influence of urban areas.
An Immigration Lawyer Discusses Legal Issues
by Linda Nanos

There is a pervasive presence of ignorance when it comes to the subject of immigration today. As educators, you are charged with the responsibility of shedding light on darkness to drive out the ignorance. Each of you in your classrooms and in your daily contacts has the opportunity to replace misconceptions with truth. But first you have to know what the misconceptions are. Some of the misconceptions that I have heard while practicing immigration law for almost thirty years make my teeth grit. The worst phrase is “Why don’t they just…”

Let’s start with the question that’s at the bottom of the entire issue: “Why don’t they just stay in their own country?” Migration has continually happened throughout the history of mankind. Our continent was populated by successive migrations. They were motivated by climate changes, loss of food sources, and maybe the unquenchable desire to see what was out there. Once people settled in an area, if another group migrated into their hunting grounds, there were battles with clubs and spears.

Today we have an abstract concept of nation with artificial borders protected by border agents with Berretta pistols. There is talk of putting up a fence along the southern border of the United States. Will this become the next Berlin Wall with agents using their pistols to shoot migrants trying to cross over to come pick fruit? Ironically, Chamber of Commerce lobbyists have said that if we want to build a fence along the southern border, we will have to hire immigrant workers to build it.

Today, migrations occur because of lack of jobs, lack of food, natural disasters, or wars. Immigrants may also simply be seeking a better life. Immigrants are innately go-getters because they are people who were dissatisfied with the status quo and are looking to improve their lives. They are attracted to a nation like the United States that offers opportunity, employment, and education for their children. They may come to join a family member who arrived here before them. In an effort to be responsive to these human migration trends, our immigration laws provide work visas, employment sponsorship for residence, family sponsorship for residence, Temporary Protected Status for people displaced by natural disasters, and political asylum for people escaping persecution. This leads me to my next teeth gritting question.

“Why don’t they just come here legally?” Some foreign nationals from industrialized nations do need a visa to travel to this country. They can enter the U.S. with their passports without visas but they are restricted to a three-month stay. For those who reside in countries that have a lower standard of living than ours, the concern is that they will not return to their countries if they get the chance to come here. In order to get a visa to visit, one must convince a Consular Officer that he or she has sufficient ties to the native country to want to return there. The standard is quite high and cannot be met by most.

Work Visas

Two mainstay work visas are the seasonal worker visa and the specialty occupation visa. The numbers of these visas have been drastically cut, leaving seasonal businesses scrambling to find workers in recent years. The year’s allotment of visas is divided in half so that visas are distributed equally during winter and summer. One of my clients brings seasonal soccer coaches from the United Kingdom and wants them here by March 1, but March 1 is at the end of the first 6-month segment and no numbers are left by then. They have to start the coaches on April 1 in order to catch the numbers for the second half. As a result, their program starts late.

In the Specialty Worker category, foreign nationals have to have a minimum of a four-year college degree plus an expertise that they are coming to perform. Take the case of my client Yuki from Japan who works for a Japanese company that distributes U.S. manufactured medical equipment in Asia. Both the U.S. and Japanese companies decided Yuki would be most effective working out of the U.S. where she could develop marketing strategies with the U.S. team. Numbers for specialty occupation visas are allocated by fiscal year, the fiscal year beginning October 1. The earliest one can apply is six months before October 1, which is April 1. There were so many applicants on the first day that the USCIS had to resort to a lottery to choose which applications to accept for processing and which to reject. Yuki’s application was not picked and now all of the numbers are used up until September 30, 2008.
The shortsightedness of these restrictive numbers is incomprehensible. Bright immigrants do not just take jobs, they make jobs. Yuki’s work on the U.S. marketing team would increase sales for both the U.S. company and the Japanese company, a win-win situation for all concerned. One of the co-founders of Google was Russian born. How many jobs has the Google phenomenon created? In the book, *The World is Flat* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), Thomas Friedman says: “We are in a global talent search, so anything we can do for America to get those top draft choices, we should do, because one of them is going to be Babe Ruth, and why should we let him or her go somewhere else?”

I mentioned earlier about Temporary Protected Status for people displaced by natural disasters. Currently two Central American countries, El Salvador and Honduras, have had TPS for 7 or more years. As the status is renewed year after year, it becomes obvious that the TPS is a way to provide aid to countries that are our political allies. When there was a tsunami in Asia, no countries in that area of the world were offered Temporary Protected Status. The law exists but is used very sparingly.

If someone files an application for political asylum, they risk removal proceedings (formerly known as deportation) if unsuccessful. The asylum office is the single most active channel of referrals to the Immigration Court. You can imagine the chilling effect of having to decide whether your case is strong enough to put forward, at the risk of being found removable if not successful. Probably the stronger your fear of persecution, the less likely you will want to expose yourself to the risk of being sent back to a country where you could be harmed.

**Green Cards**

If a foreign national entered the U.S. without inspection by immigration, it does not matter if he or she has a U.S. citizen spouse and three U.S. citizen children. Since 2001 there has been no way to legalize that person’s status. If someone is an immediate relative of a person who entered the U.S with inspection, we can help that client in a reasonable period of time. For all others, the waits can range from five years to twelve. Here is a typical scenario: Three brothers immigrate to the U.S. but their sister stays behind to care for their parents. She is so busy taking care of them that she never marries. When they die, she finds herself alone with no family in her country. One of the brothers decides to file for her to immigrate to the U.S. and learns that it will take twelve years for her to immigrate legally. She decides to travel here on a passport that does not require a visa and overstays to join the twelve million undocumented immigrants in the United States. This woman, who never did an illegal thing in her life, is now one of the vilified so-called illegal aliens.

Several times a week, clients come to my office to tell me that their employer wants to sponsor them for a green card. If they entered the U.S. illegally or came legally but overstayed, I tell them it is not feasible. For any case started after April 2001, the rule is that the foreign national must have entered the U.S. legally and remained here legally for the entire process, which could take five years. The clients usually leave disillusioned. If they are in a lawful status such as a specialty occupation visa, then we can commence the arduous procedure of sponsorship, which is designed to discourage them at every turn. A client, who is the director of a popular TV show, wanted to sponsor his live-in housekeeper. He reluctantly provided a copy of his tax return to demonstrate his ability to pay her. Because the housekeeper was not on his payroll at the time he filed for her, he was asked to provide a detailed household budget to show that he could afford to pay her salary (which was four per cent of his adjusted gross income). Fortunately, he cared enough about her to expose his finances. Many cases would have ended with that last intrusion.

The Department of Labor is looking to immigration to supplement our own dwindling work force. Baby boomers are beginning to retire and U.S. citizens are having fewer children and starting families later. Without immigrants, we will not have a labor base to replace today’s workers.

**Legal Troubles**

My next teeth-gritting question is “Why don’t they just stay out of trouble?” Our latest media hot potato issue is driver’s licenses. The policy proposed in New York State by former Governor Eliot Spitzer required at least six months validity on any immigration status before issuing a license, permit, or ID. Even our clients have legal status sometimes have trouble complying with this rule. For example, Jose is here in the U.S. on Temporary Protected Status. Immigration took an inordinate amount of time renewing his work permit, leaving him with a card that was
issued for only five months. His driver’s license expired, but he could not renew it, and without a license, he could not get car insurance. He could not stop working because he owns a house and has three children. There is no public transportation to his job that he has held legally for the past seven years. Suppose Jose has an automobile accident, probably because he was so nervous driving without a license and insurance. He gets arrested for driving without a license or insurance and pleads guilty to two violations. Now Jose is disqualified by immigration from the program he is in because of his convictions and he can never get back into legal status.

**Learning English**

I saved the best question for last: “Why don’t they just learn to speak English?” One of my clients, Maria, lived on a farm before fleeing the civil war in El Salvador that raged for 12 years from 1980 to 1992. You may remember some of the atrocities of that war: the murder of Archbishop Romero, the murder of Jesuit Priests, raped and murdered nuns, and villagers rounded up into churches that were set on fire. Maria’s life used to revolve around gathering eggs, picking vegetables, and making tortillas. She had a productive farm and raised enough to sell produce to villagers. When guerrilla troops arrived at her house and demanded food at gunpoint, she gave them eggs, vegetables and tortillas. She was afraid that if she did not help them, she would end up one of the decapitated bodies she had to pass each day in the streets. A villager saw the guerrillas coming out of her house with provisions and told soldiers that Maria might be a guerrilla sympathizer. As the soldiers banged on her front door, she and her husband escaped out of the back and did not stop going until they crossed the Rio Grande. Maria is my age, but she does not have a law degree, a college degree, or a high school diploma. In fact, Maria never went to school. It was not necessary for her agricultural life style. When she comes to my office to sign papers, she brings a piece of paper with her name written on it by one of her children so she can copy it. Maria will probably never learn English.

Maria’s husband has a few more years of education. He works as a warehouse supervisor and the office manager complained to me that she does not know why they are sponsoring him when, “He doesn’t even speak English.” I suggested that maybe it is because he works sixty hours a week for them and never misses a day. One thing that this couple knows is hard work, but they are not literate and cannot learn a second language because of basic literacy issues in their own language. English literacy may have to wait in some cases for the second generation.

Educators have the opportunity to illuminate the darkness of ignorance and misconception that surrounds immigration. Our laws do not provide channels for people to gain or maintain legal status in this country. By providing people with legal means to live and work in the United States, immigrants will be screened for medical problems, fingerprinted to detect criminal histories, given Social Security numbers so they can pay taxes, and have driver’s licenses and insurance. By withholding legal status from hardworking immigrants, the laws create an illegal sub-class of undocumented people. Learn the facts and remember that it is always better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. Go out there and light some candles.

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**New Citizenship Test – Could Your Students Pass?**

Since October 1, 2008, applicants for United States citizenship must pass a new oral examination. There are one hundred questions and recommended answers candidates receive in advance to study. During the naturalization interview, an immigration officer asks the applicant ten of the questions. The applicant must correctly answer six to pass that portion of the interview. Applicants are given two chances to pass the test. If they fail both times, they must reapply for naturalization and begin the process again. Legal immigrants eligible to become citizens must also pass a reading and writing test of English proficiency. The civics portion of the test is available online at [http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf](http://www.uscis.gov/files/nativedocuments/100q.pdf).
I am not an expert on immigration. I am simply a social studies teacher and a citizen of the United States who is concerned with the course that our nation is taking in dealing with immigration issues. I am especially worried about the economic, health, social, educational, and national security tribulations that illegal immigration is forcing upon this nation and its citizens.

There is a virtual civil war brewing between two camps: one camp wants open borders with no restrictions on people who enter the United States. The other camp includes two-thirds of American citizens that want the federal government to stop millions of people from illegally entering the United States. I am arguing the position held by the majority of the American population.

I do not want to come across as cold-hearted and a calculating xenophobe. Two years ago, a student approached me and asked if I could help him stay in this country by writing a letter to an INS judge. This student had come to the United States illegally. He, his father, and his grandmother walked from El Salvador to Texas. Both his father and grandmother died along the way and he had to bury them on the roadside. When he crossed into Texas, this young man was picked up by INS agents and brought to a detention center. He would have been deported if he had not had the name of his aunt, her phone number, and address in New York. His aunt flew out to Texas the next day and brought him back to New York with her. For the past few years, he has been in an ongoing battle to stay in this country. I wrote a very long letter on his behalf and I am happy to say that he is now on his way to becoming an American citizen.

Much of the material I present here was assembled by Dr. Deborah Schuman-Kauflin of the Violent Crimes Institute and documentation is available on her website http://www.drdsk.com (accessed December 15, 2007). It was disseminated widely by Congressman Tom Tancredo (R-Colorado) during his campaign for the Republican Party nomination for president.

Cost of Illegal Immigration

There were more than twenty million illegal immigrants living in the United States in 2007, although some experts put the number at closer to forty million. They cost the United States an estimated $50 billion annually in assistance programs. This figure does not include the $42 billion wired to Mexico during 2006-2007 or the $336 billion wired to Latin America since 2001. That $50 billion simply includes welfare services, medical services, educational costs, housing assistance programs, and the cost of incarcerating illegal aliens. Law abiding United States citizens are paying this price when we pay our taxes.

There are currently over 5 million illegal aliens enrolled in American public schools – grades K-12. These figures do not include “anchor babies,” children born in the United States to illegal aliens hoping to improve their status. During the past 10 years, it has cost the American taxpayer over $17 billion dollars to educate illegals. The figure jumps to $34.5 billion per year if we include the cost of educating the American born children of illegal aliens.

There is a myth that the United States needs this population to keep the economy going and to do the jobs that Americans won’t do. This is simply not true. Americans will not allow themselves to be exploited by corporations who benefit from cheap labor. They would do the work for fair compensation and benefits. It is the presence of illegal aliens that drives down wages so that legal immigrants and American citizens do not take these jobs.

Dangers of Illegal Immigration

Legal immigrants to the United States are required to have medical screenings to ensure that they do not bring contagious diseases into the country. Illegal
immigrants are not screened and are bringing third world diseases into our country. Malaria was eradicated in the United States during the 1940s, but has recently made a comeback. Dengue outbreaks, unknown in the United States until recently, have started to occur. Between 2004 and 2007, there were 9,000 newly diagnosed cases of leprosy in the United States, mostly among illegal aliens. Cases of HIV, Hepatitis A through E, Tuberculosis (including drug resistant strains), Chagas Disease, Whooping Cough, Cysticercosis (brain worms), Guinea Worm Infection, Schistosomiasis, Morgellons Disease (cognitive, gastrointestinal and causes fibrous lesions on skin) have all been found in the illegal population. These dangerous, often deadly diseases put everyone at risk, while treating infected illegal aliens costs American taxpayer billions of dollars every year.

The crime statistics associated with illegal aliens are staggering. At least 4.5 million pounds of cocaine with a street value of over $72 billion is smuggled across the southern border of the United States every year. Illegal aliens commit between 700,000 to 1,289,000 or more crimes per year. This includes at least 2,158 murders and an estimated 130,909 sexual crimes each year. The overall financial impact of illegal alien crimes is estimated at between $14.4 and $81 billion or more per year.

National security is on the top of the list of public concerns. It is worth noting that three of the four terrorist pilots in the 9/11 attacks were in the country illegally. The next big incident could be far greater and kill many more Americans. The northern border is a huge threat to our national security. Canada has no-questions-asked immigration policy, and many border crossings between the United States and Canada are unmanned. Securing the northern border should be a top priority for all American citizens.

One result of illegal immigration is that the United States is becoming “Balkanized.” Why should we have to press a button to hear a recording in English? If English proficiency is required for legal immigrants to become citizens, why are voting ballots in other languages? Earlier immigrants who came to this nation from all over the world assimilated into American society and culture. They wanted to become Americans and were proud to do so. This was the old theory of the “melting pot.” I am not saying that people should give up their cultural heritage and identity. I am simply saying that if you come to the United States, learn the language, its culture, and its traditions. Become an American.

Once again, I stress I am not anti-immigrant. People the world over have come to the U.S. in search of the “American Dream.” Most of us here today have family that immigrated to the U.S. in search of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. I am not demanding that the United States shut down its borders. What I am saying is that immigration should be done legally through proper channels to prevent the spread of disease and crime, the degradation of the public education system, the decay of the economic system, another terrorist attack, and the weakening our great nation.
An Advocate Discusses Legal Rights for Immigrants
by Tara Keenan-Thomson

Undocumented immigration has been an issue since the colonists – undocumented immigrants themselves – set foot on these shores. The first border control agents were indigenous people who, much later to their chagrin, never thought to demand documents to validate the colonists’ presence in the “new land.” But that is history. This paper is meant to address today. However, before we do so, we must put all our cards on the table. The writer of this paper is not only an employee of New York affiliate of the American Civil Liberties Union, a nonprofit group dedicated to enforcing the Bill of Rights, she is a published historian trained to gather facts from a variety of sources, weigh them, and formulate an interpretation.

In 1868 the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was passed. It states, “No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any state deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.” This means that non-citizens and undocumented persons deserve due process and equal protection.

There is nothing in the Constitution that states that it is illegal for people, whatever their citizenship status, to be in the United States. In fact, most undocumented immigrants have come legally but have overstayed their visa. I often stand at the Home Depot parking lot on Fulton Avenue at 7 A.M. in the morning and give workshops to the men waiting there for construction work. They tell me time and again that they wish to be citizens. However, they list two reasons why they cannot start the process. First, it is prohibitively expensive because generally one must have a lawyer. Second, they cite the fear factor; they fear getting denied and being sent home.

There are many arguments people put forward in discussing the “illegals” of undocumented immigration. The first one is based on fairness: “They don’t pay taxes and they take up social security.” An answer is to help undocumented immigrants so they pay in. A less onerous process for becoming a citizen would allow them to enter the system, come out of the shadows, and start demonstrating fiscal responsibility.

A second argument uses patriotism: “They don’t want to become American. They just want to take advantage of us and send the money home.” How much of this is fear and how much is fact? I remind you of how many undocumented immigrants applied for legal status in the 1980s when they were offered amnesty. A serious immigration reform plan must include a workable path to citizenship that encourages people who are already here to assume the mantle of becoming tax-paying members of this diverse and multicultural society.

A third argument against immigration reform deals with responsibility: “They came here illegally. They jumped the border. They’ve overstayed their welcome. They have forfeited their rights.” The Constitution demands that due process apply to all. When we let the government violate the rights of some, they can violate the rights of anyone. The fact that undocumented immigrants came here illegally or stayed here illegally represents a failure on the part of our government to adequately deal with the nation’s workforce needs. I am not a public policy planner, but I can tell a system in crisis when I see it. It is time we encourage our representatives to come up with a thoughtful plan for dealing with such an important issue.

On Long Island, we have had a succession of serious violations of due process during immigration raids. The news covered the lack of professionalism by immigration agents, but it ignored the way Latinos were rounded up on a bus in Nassau County for merely riding while “brown.” There were raids on the homes of naturalized citizens simply because they were of Latino descent. We have had mass detention without trial of people, mass deportation without trial, and local ordinances allowing people with brown skin to be stopped without probable cause or suspicion of wrongdoing. This puts the United States on a slippery slope towards oppression that smacks of European regimes from a bygone era.

The federal government must be held accountable for its own failed policies. We need to come up with a thoughtful, comprehensive plan to deal with the approximately 11 million people that are already on our soil working in the jobs all of us require to keep our children looked after, our houses built, our gardens tended, and our floors sparkling. The Constitution demands nothing less.
In reviewing the other papers in this collection, I have serious concerns about the source utilized by Kellyann Dooley in her article, “A Teacher Believes Americans are Paying the Price.” Her source, Dr. Deborah Schurman-Kauflin admits her expertise is criminology, not statistics, and certainly not the costs of immigration. Nowhere on her website does she list her qualifications or research methodology. She is not backed by any scholarly institution, think-tank, or publisher, and her allegations are dubious. Quoting such questionable sources is unhelpful to furthering the discussion of immigration reform and only serves to sidetrack attempts at developing a workable solution to this problem.

There is no doubt the system is broken. We need to hold our government officials to the task of coming up with a comprehensive solution that puts those who are already here on a path to citizenship. Above all, we need our government agencies to start reading the Constitution and the Bill of Rights so they, too, can begin to understand that in the United States all people are entitled to basic rights of due process and equal treatment under the law. The Constitution does not suggest this course of action; it demands it.

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**An Immigrants Describes Her Experience**

*By Atia Pasha*

My husband came to the United States as a legal immigrant for an education, which in the modern technological world is the key to success. I joined him in 1987 and we have lived here, raising our children, for over twenty years. There are many, many things that I have come to see, like, love, and also dislike, in this great country.

I came from a part of Pakistan that is very hot and humid with 10-month long summers. I love the experience of all four seasons in their full bloom. I especially enjoyed my first winter.

The American people are diverse, decent, and very cooperative. My family used to live in Flushing, Queens. Queens is one of the most culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse areas in the five boroughs of New York City and perhaps in the whole world. For a social scientist studying the American melting pot of cultures and peoples it must be heaven. Our landlords were an older Italian-American couple who used to drive me to get groceries and help me with other shopping.

I feel that after 9/11 attitudes towards immigrants, especially Muslims changed. I do not mean my American friends. People who know my family personally have remained as gracious as before. I mean the general social and political climate in this country.

Before the events in 2001, I did not practice “Hijab,” which requires Islamic women to wear a head covering. Since then, I have worn a head covering and followed a religious dress code to make a public statement about my beliefs and to demand that they be respected. No religion in the world teaches or endorses bad actions. In Islam, as in Christianity, killing of an innocent human is the killing of humanity and is prohibited. In the time of war, Muslims are not only forbidden to kill civilians, but are also barred from cutting down or damaging trees and the natural world. We should not judge an entire religion because of the actions of individuals, yet many Americans have been willing to do that. I am puzzled because when we teach about the European Holocaust we do not condemn Christianity because Germans were Christian. When someone commits a murder in the United States, the media does not say they are Christians. People have their own issues and should be judged on that basis by the courts, not because of their religious beliefs.

My husband and I are Pakistani by birth, Muslim by religion, and American by citizenship. Our children were born American citizens. Our education in the United States has allowed us to become more tolerant and well-rounded individuals. I am proud of whom I am and that I follow my religion’s teachings to respect everyone for who they are and to see people by their true character and not by the color of their skin or as a representative of a religion. My dream is that future generations of new immigrants will take advantage of educational opportunities in the United States and that this will permit them to obtain more prestigious and lucrative jobs as well as to become responsible citizens. I also dream that they will be fully accepted by Americans.
Shannon Adams, Unatego (NY) Central School: In the United States, much of the reaction to new immigrants is punitive. I teach in an area where the economy is pretty weak. A lot of my students have family members who are unemployed and they are looking to place blame. Many feel immigrants are coming to this country to steal our jobs and ruin our society. You hear we should punish desperate people and send them back. Instead of spending tax money building fences, I would rather use money to address the reasons people are fleeing those countries. We need to tackle poverty, lack of educational opportunities, the violence and lack of personal liberties, all the things that people are fleeing from. As long as people view the United States as a land of opportunity and see no possibility for a better life at home, they will try to enter the United States by any possible means.

Shannon Alexander, Hofstra University: Illegal immigrants are flooding to our country. They are being employed “off the books,” and are reaping the benefits of not having to pay taxes. Former New York State Governor Elliot Spitzer proposed giving illegal immigrants driver’s licenses. This idea was soundly rejected by his political opponents and by the public. I do not think it could have worked anyway. Illegal immigration is a national problem, not a local one. It is past time that the national government act to solve the problem. I have seen how a community can be torn apart by the issue of illegal immigrants. I am from the small town of Holbrook on Long Island. My school district included the neighboring towns of Holbrook, Holtsville, Lake Grove, Lake Ronkonkoma, Nesconset, Ronkonkoma, and Farmingville. During the last few years, Farmingville has gotten national attention because of the award winning film Farmingville that documented attitudes towards the illegal immigrants living in these towns. Many people in Farmingville were angry because large groups of undocumented Latino immigrant workers were gathering in the town, in the shopping malls and on sidewalks, waiting for work. Tension eventually bubbled over and two Latino men were murdered after a minor dispute with their neighbor. This hate crime led to protests by pro-immigrant rights groups outside the schools and the library, and eventually to counter-demonstrations. I was only sixteen and was frightened when I was caught in the middle of the protests. I believe everyone should have an opportunity to live in the country. My Irish ancestors who came to the United States during the late 19th century most likely would not have been admitted if today’s standards were implemented then. However, there must be some kind of process in place. The incidents at Farmingville are an example of the divisions that will affect this country if the immigration issue is not resolved soon.

Levi Anthony, Information Technology High School, Queens, NY: In high school, we teach students that there are two factors that cause people to migrate from one country to another. The pull factors are the economic opportunities that are available in this country that attract people from all over the world. As we try to regulate immigration, we are concentrating too much of our attention on the pull factors and not paying enough attention to the push factors – the reasons people are leaving their homelands. Globalization has devastated many parts of the world. Push factors are the extreme poverty that exists in Mexico, many parts of the Caribbean and Central America, and in other parts of the world. Western economic policies, such as demands for free trade coupled with U.S. agricultural subsidies for domestic production of crops, makes the situation even worse. In many African countries, cotton is the life-blood of the economy. When the United States subsidizes farmers in this country to produce cotton, it is impoverishing people in third world countries that produce cotton. Part of the problem is that in many countries land ownership is highly concentrated. In Central America, the bulk of arable land is owned by the wealthiest five percent of the population. It is ironic that when a country such as Venezuela tries to use more of its resources to provide social programs that will make life more bearable and people less likely to move, the United States tries to undermine its government. We will not be able to keep people from migrating to this country, either legally or illegally, if the only other option they have is starvation.
Cathy Applegate, Jefferson Elementary School, North Arlington, NJ: In 4th and 5th grade social studies, I focus on the fact that we are nation of immigrants and that new immigrants should have the same opportunities and rights as we do. In the debate over immigration reform, it is important what we tell all sides of the story. Children need to understand the difference between what an immigrant was before, what an immigrant is today, and possibilities in the future. I have discussed the problem of undocumented people with my students. Most of the children feel they should follow the same process as other immigrants have had to follow to become citizens of the United States. Personally, I feel undocumented immigrants who want to stay in the United States and are interested in becoming citizens should have the opportunity. Those who do not want to become permanent residents and citizens should be deported.

Laura Argenzio, Hicksville (NY) CSD: Immigration to the United States has gotten out of control, so much so that we cannot even keep track of or absorb the people who are coming here. I understand immigrants who come to this country illegally want a better life for their families, to escape religious, social, economic, or political oppression. However, they are using public services and taking away the jobs that citizens of the United States need. Congress passed legislation putting extra agents and fences along the U.S.-Mexico border. It will cost U.S. taxpayers a lot of money and I fear it is not going to stop people from sneaking into this country. They will find other ways, such as applying for temporary visas and just overstaying their time. Much more vigorous measures are needed so that people realize that they cannot just enter and stay in the United States illegally.

Lysa Beatus, Northport (NY) CSD: There is a growing population in the United States of children, either immigrants or the offspring of immigrants, who lack proficiency in the English language. School districts must reallocate funds or raise property taxes to pay the additional expense of educating them. The federal government exacerbated the situation when it passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and failed to provide school districts with the necessary financial support to comply with the law. The situation creates tension in communities, as immigrants, whether documented or not, are blamed for the rising cost of education. Schools are supposed to teach tolerance and the benefits of multiculturalism. How can this happen when many families feel the education of their children is being sacrificed to accommodate the immigrant population?

Kimberly Cahill, EBC High School for Public Service – Bushwick, Brooklyn, NY: At my high school, I have served as the Service Director for our public service program. I was responsible for contacting community organizations and setting up volunteer internships for our students. Many of the community organizations were staffed by people that either spoke little English or none at all. This was surprising to me at first, but then I realized that the broader community was actually an accurate reflection of the community of students who attended our school. I have students in my classes that also speak little or no English. We do not offer them bilingual classes, but it is obvious that we need them. My English-as-a-Second-Language students try hard to learn, but are constantly falling behind because of language difficulties. Their troubles with the curriculum reverberate through the classroom. With 34 students in a class it is virtually impossible to give them individual attention. Material does not get covered. Other students try to help them, but they fall behind and their grades suffer. My students have no support structure for learning English at home. Their parents, if they speak English at all, may be working two or three jobs and are hardly ever home. The growing population of undocumented students is affecting the other students as well. On a Junior class trip to Washington D.C., students were prevented from visiting the White House because some of them were undocumented and they run background checks on the visitors. The growing population of non-English speaking students may end up forcing schools to become bilingual, which will put English only teachers out of work. I love my students, and I love working at EBC, but the language shift in the classroom has begun to make my job more and more difficult, especially when it comes to communicating with students and parents.

Michael Collazo Ross High School Center, Brentwood, NY: Traditional capitalism is one of the causes of global warming. The bottom line for companies in this system is profit. That does not mean capitalism cannot be a force to solve global warming. Our society must find ways to tweak the system so businesses profit by being environmentally conscious. It is hard to blame countries such as China for polluting because they are using the only resources
they have available to improve conditions for immigrant populations. I am not sure what the solution to this problem is. We probably need to have more government involvement in the economy, regulate companies more closely, encourage the use of environmentally friendly products, and promote more effective planning.

Matthew Crichton, Turtle Hook Middle School, Uniondale, NY: As a young boy, every Sunday night I watched The Simpsons. A typical episode was an exaggerated parody of a family drama. Occasionally, however, the show switched to a more serious issue. In 1996, well before the current immigration “crisis,” The Simpsons covered the topic of illegal immigration in an episode entitled Much Apu about Nothing. That episode on immigration has as much relevance today as it did then. A bear wandered into Springfield and Mayor Quimby raised taxes to establish a Bear Patrol. When townspeople were angered by the cost of the patrol, he blamed the high taxes on illegal immigrants and initiated Proposition 24. It called for the deportation of all illegal immigrants from Springfield.

Although I was only twelve, the episodes message was clear to me. Whenever a debate over illegal immigrants arises in the United States, it is because illegal immigrants are being used as scapegoats. I refer to this message as the Simpsons’ theory for the scapegoating of immigrants, or the Simpsons’ theory for short. In the television show, illegal immigrants were blamed for a tax increase that was actually caused by the completely unnecessary Bear Patrol. If the Simpsons’ theory is correct, what are illegal immigrants being unnecessarily blamed for today? Two particular issues come to mind; the high cost of health care and the tightening job market.

I am constantly told by conservative friends and family members that a “flood” of illegal immigrants has put a severe burden on hospitals and doctors. Supposedly, because of illegal immigrants, health care prices and premiums have sky rocketed to the point where the average American risks losing coverage. I have serious doubts about whether this argument has any validity. The real problem with the health care industry has more to do with the influence of insurance and drug companies on the federal government, than with illegal immigrants. A blind commitment to privatization and hostility towards a European, or even a Canadian, social health care system prevents the government from controlling escalating costs.

There is a degree of logic to the argument that illegal immigrants are taking away American jobs and driving down wages. The more labor is available, the less the businesses will have to pay for it. Illegal immigrants steal the jobs because they are willing to work for less money and under worse conditions. Competition, and the drive for higher profits, after all is the nature of the American capitalist economy.

If illegal immigrants are not the cause of low wages and high unemployment, what is? Once again, I suspect the government has more to do with the problem than anything else. Since the Reagan administration, it has aligned itself with the wealthy and essentially turned its back on the working class. Government fiscal and monetary policies during the Bush administration resulted in the largest wealth distribution differential in the United States since the Great Depression. The rich got richer and more powerful, while the poor were getting poorer. Corporations, that influence government policy, found it more profitable to take their businesses elsewhere where they could spend far less on labor, than to invest in providing jobs to American workers.

Certainly, I have oversimplified, but the point remains the same: illegal immigrants are blamed for problems in American society that are much larger and much more complex than anything they have caused. They may contribute to these problems, but they did not cause them. This episode of The Simpsons should be aired more frequently. Its message is clear. Do not trust the government if it blames illegal immigrants for a problem; there is likely an issue of much more importance being hidden.

Marissa DeLillo, Hicksville (NY) High School: People who are struggling so hard to get into this country possess great qualities of character. They have the determination, drive, and motivation to make a better life for themselves and for their families. These qualities should be admired by the American public and ways should be found to make them legal residents and eventually citizens. My father is now a contractor, but he started in the construction industry working seven days a week for low wages. Along the way he became friendly with many Mexican immigrant workers. I have learned about the experiences and struggles of these men from his stories. I have seen, first hand, how hard they work and I think we should be pleased if they decide to become American citizens. The last time I checked, the Declaration of Independence committed this country to the right of
people to the “pursuit of happiness” and declared all people to be equal. I feel strongly that people who are already here, work hard, and have not committed crimes, should be allowed to stay.

Rena Drezner, Massapequa (NY) High School: The problem with immigration today is that a lot of the illegal immigrants come here to work, but send their earnings to family in their home country. One of Mexico’s largest revenue streams consists of money sent home by legal immigrants and illegal aliens working in the U.S. This is a massive transfer of wealth away from the American economy. One solution to this problem would be for the government to severely penalize businesses that employ undocumented aliens. The United States needs immigrants. There is certainly a lot of work that needs to be done. But it should be carefully regulated to ensure that it meets the needs of this country.

Anthony Geremina Valley Stream (NY) South High School: NAFTA, which went into effect in January 1994, resulted in the impoverishment of rural farming communities in Mexico. Since then, millions of people have migrated into Mexico’s cities or have tried to illegally cross the border into the United States. There have been similar migrations from Africa into the European Union nations as desperate people flee war and poverty and seek work and better lives. While we should be sympathetic with these displaced people, the first responsibility of the United States and other economically advanced countries is to meet the needs of their own citizens and legal residents. This may require that they close their borders to both legal and illegal immigrants.

Charlie Gifford, Farnsworth Middle School, Guilderland, NY: There are currently a large number of immigrants, both documented and undocumented, coming into the United States and doing jobs that most Americans do not want to do, either because they are too dangerous or too low paid. I think it is rather hypocritical to say the poor, tired, and hungry can no longer enter the United States. That does not mean everyone should be allowed into the country, we do need regulations for security purposes. There needs to be some kind of regulation on immigration and also to protect the people who come here to work. As an eighth grade United States history teacher I involve students in discussions of immigration both in the past and present. Students are fascinated by current events coverage of the immigration debate and personal stories that I find in the news. This helps them better understand the reasons for immigration and problems faced by immigrants to the United States in earlier eras. We recently discussed the voyage of the St. Louis and students were upset that the United States had turned back Jewish immigrants prior to World War II, knowing the discrimination and possible death they faced in Europe. Students are often asking me “why do I have to study history?” The ongoing immigration debate helps teachers answer that question.

Juanda Gikandi, Princeton (NJ) High School: This is a nation that was built on immigrants. They made major contributions to what it has become throughout its history. They continue to play an intricate role in our social and economic life. I do not see why this country cannot find ways to continue to include immigrants in the American fabric. While it is true that there are large numbers of undocumented immigrants who are technically breaking the law, this is because U.S. immigration policy is unbalanced and discriminates against immigrants from some regions and in favor of others. The people we call “illegals” provide important services to this country and there would be serious economic dislocation if they were barred. There needs to be a way for them to stay legally. Most of these people would be very pleased to become American citizens.

Kristen Joseph, Merrick Avenue Middle School, Bellmore-Merrick (NY) CSD: If current immigration trends continue, the population of the United States will increase to 468 million people by the year 2060 – a 56 percent increase. This country does not have the resources, financial or otherwise, to meet the needs of another 10.3 million immigrants every seven years. Our classrooms are busting at the seams and cannot contain the overflow of immigrants whose illegal parents do not pay into the tax system but still benefit from others who do. Our healthcare system is overwhelmed as a result of uninsured immigrants, as well. Due to a lack of healthcare, the uninsured will often go to emergency rooms for basic healthcare needs such as flu shots, check-ups, and basic antibiotics. This puts unnecessary stress on the emergency healthcare system and can lead to a neglect of those who truly need the care offered from emergency rooms. Statistics show that many of the people who utilize an emergency room in lieu of private medical care and do not pay their bills,
resulting in higher taxes and healthcare premiums for
the rest of us, have been illegal aliens.

Frank Maniscalco, Seafood (NY) High School:
Economic policies such as NAFTA were meant to redistribute the wealth and job opportunities of the people living in North and Central America. What appears to have happen is that large corporations have moved into markets that were closed in the past. This has destroyed local economies in Central America and the United States and caused the migration of people to cities and foreign countries searching for work. Today, documented and undocumented immigrants make up approximately 13% of the population of the United States and the figure should reach 15% by 2020. Many fill jobs that are labor intense and do not require high levels of education or facility with the English language. A lot like immigrants who came to this country in the past without the ability to speak English, they have become the backbone of many industries. While some plan to return home, many hope to make a life here and to educate their children so that can be socially, economically and politically mobile.

Seamus McCarville, Lancaster (NY) Middle School:
Immigration is a very sensitive issue, yet it must be discussed in the classroom. Immigrants who are already here, whether they are legal or not, offer a great economic service to this country. In western New York, there is not a large immigrant population, but those who are here work to benefit the economy. The best way to limit immigration to the United States from Mexico and Central America is to offer aid and help rebuild the economies in these other countries. I support free trade, but it must be done without corruption. The United States could build the biggest wall ever and they would still find ways to cross the border illegally. Even when people are caught and sent home, they keep coming back to this country. Building up the border patrol will be both expensive and futile.

Suzy Mellen, South Woods Middle School, Syosset, NY: As a 6th grade social studies teacher, I discuss immigration during my culture unit. Students need to understand and define themselves within their own cultural groups before they can understand other cultures throughout the world. I have students examine cultural change and the forces that cause change, including human migration. This provides ample opportunity to discuss the various “push and pull” factors that inspired immigrants to come to America in search of a better life. I find that by introducing a topic like immigration into the curriculum, students become more engaged in class. Learning becomes personal and much more meaningful as they explore their own family histories.

Jane O’Neill, Passaic County Technical Institute, Wayne, NJ, Past-President, NJCSS: In my school immigration is an issue. Many of our students are immigrants who came to this country hoping to get a higher education, but some intend to return to their native countries and do not develop a connection with the United States. They want the benefits that the United States has to offer but not the responsibilities of citizenship. Some of these students even express a distinct dislike for this country. It is evident in the way they talk in class and in their writings. They have very clear national identities and they resist assimilation into American culture. They do not have the complete responsibility for this attitude. Part of the reason for this has been the way this country has treated them with suspicion since 9/11. Our Islamic students have certainly felt backlash just for being Muslim. I think undocumented immigrants should be allowed to remain at this point and there should be a process put in place to accommodate them. New Jersey was contemplating giving licenses to undocumented residents, however there is fear in the immigrant community that any government documentation would make them a target of the IRS for deportation.

Crystal Powder, Turtle Hook Middle School, Uniondale, NY: As a first generation American citizen and having a father who was involved in the immigration field, I certainly understand the plight of undocumented immigrants. Immigration is the only reason why America has been successful, and I think people often forget that. Why is it that undocumented immigrants avoid the legal process? I am sure that it has everything to do with how expensive and complex the process can be. My father went through the appropriate methods to become a citizen. However, even though he was well educated and dressed in a suit, he still had trouble getting a taxi in New York City. I just wonder if people’s motivations behind opposing immigration are really coming from some place else.

Marc Rinow Lancaster (NY) Middle School: There have always been groups of immigrants entering the United States who did jobs that no one else wanted to
do. In the 1840s the despised immigrants were German and Irish. I do not see the reason to deny people the ability to come to this country. My views might be different if I lived in the southwest, but basically I believe keeping immigrants out of the country is not in the American spirit.

**Nick Santora, MS 210, Queens, NY:** Last summer I had a brief conversation with a Guatemalan day laborer waiting for a job outside a paint store in Roslyn, New York. He told me that at home he was not allowed to sell his crops in an open market. The government, at the insistence of large landowners, kept small farmers from plying their trade. He was forced to emigrate to the U.S. He works side jobs (painting, carpentry, etc.) and sends the money back to his wife and children. Public Citizen, a U.S. advocacy group engaged in consumer advocacy says that pacts such as NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) and CAFTA (Central American Free Trade Agreement) have created more damage than good. Thousands of independent farmers have been wiped out with farmland shifting into the hands of huge agribusinesses such as Tyson Foods and Cargill. I believe that when one considers the number of Third World countries that the U.S. has meddled with (fixing elections, overturning democratically elected governments that dared to go socialist), our nation owes a great debt to those it has oppressed and displaced. The influx of millions of undocumented immigrants is payback for the damage our leaders have caused to those countries.

**Mark Stetina, Moorestown (NJ) Friends School:** The debate over immigration reform has ignored the humanity of the people involved. We are discussing human beings, not statistics. I personally went through all of the legal immigration procedures because of my wife, who is a native of Argentina. It is amazing how inefficient and full of contradictions the system is. There is a double standard. If my wife were from Spain or the United Kingdom, the process would have been simpler and she could have entered this country immediately. Because she was from Latin America, it took three years for her to get a green card. It is not surprising given the process that many people out of desperation come to the United States without documentation. Other things disturb me as well. This country claims to believe in family values yet it sends mothers back to Mexico whose children were born in the United States and are U.S. citizens. People complain about the costs of supporting new or undocumented immigrants, but we also need to look at the benefit. We need to develop a more humane policy.

**Judy van Tijn, Moorestown (NJ) Friends School:** My concern about the immigration reform debate in the United States is actually very simple. The debate over immigration reform has been stolen by anti-immigration people. They do not look at the evidence. The research that’s been done in places like Stanford and other universities show that modern immigrants are following the exact same course that older immigrants followed and within three generations their children speak English and are assimilated to the same degree as earlier groups. The debate is fundamentally flawed because anti-immigration groups have succeeded on making the discussion how the country should respond to negative impact about immigration. They assume immigration is bad, undocumented immigrants are criminals, and that Hispanic and Asian immigrants will not assimilate into American society. These people will do exactly what our grandparents and great-grandparents did. They will become Americans.

**Amy Warchola, MS 124, Queens, NY:** Many of my middle school students are either immigrants to the United States or the children of immigrants and they tend to be unhappy about their experiences in this country. In our urban community, these children constantly face social problems such as poverty, pollution, gang violence, and racism. Nearly twenty percent of my students have family members who are presently in the military. In class discussions, they speak out against U.S. involvement in the war in Iraq and Afghanistan, expressing fear for the safety of their relatives. My students believe too much emphasis is placed on American history in school, which is the middle school social studies curriculum, and would like to learn more about their own cultures and traditions. I question whether these children are disillusioned with their American experiences because of national political policies or if their frustrations have deeper roots in their personal experiences living in a culturally mixed and often intolerant communities.
Morristown, NJ Divided Over Undocumented Immigrants

Morristown immigration rally results in five arrests. Hundreds protest on both sides of the issue  
Source: Daily Record, July 29, 2007

Hundreds crowded the front lawn of town hall on Saturday in a boisterous and passionate rally in support of U.S. immigration laws – an event headlined by Mayor Donald Cresitello – while hundreds more conducted a loud counter-rally, decrying the main event’s speakers as racist.

A massive police force was on hand to maintain order during the rally and counter-rally, with more than 100 officers and a circling state police helicopter brought in for crowd control and surveillance. Ultimately, five people – all affiliated with the counter-protesters, police said – were arrested on Saturday, and dozens more were ticketed for disorderly conduct. Organizer Robb Pearson of Mount Olive, whose ProAmerica Society web site fueled interest in the event, was pleased by the turnout, estimated at 500. Meanwhile, about a mile across town, a much quieter prayer vigil took place outside St. Margaret’s Church on Sussex Avenue. About 100 people took part in the vigil, sponsored by several immigrant support organizations and scheduled deliberately at the same time as the ProAmerica rally. “They came here illegally, but they’re not illegal people, and they should be given a chance to assimilate into the community,” said Greg Sullivan, co-director of the Social Justice Ministry of St. Elizabeth’s Church in Wyckoff. “Goodwill and reason and a sense of justice should rule out, but I don’t know how long it’s going to take.”

Cresitello has helped stamp Morristown as a flashpoint in the nationwide debate over illegal immigration and the government’s perceived tolerance of illegal immigrants, primarily those from Latin America. Since he was elected in 2005, Cresitello has taken stands against “stacking” – illegally overcrowded housing – and day laborers. But it was his plan to have local police officers deputized to enforce federal immigration laws under the Department of Homeland Security’s 287(g) program that has stirred the most controversy. As the keynote speaker for Saturday’s rally, Cresitello also was the lightning rod for many of the 200-plus protestors gathered across the street, near King’s supermarket, uttering such phrases as “Cresitello KKK,” among other derogatory statements.

In his speech, Cresitello called on Gov. Jon Corzine and Attorney General Anne Milgram to drop their opposition to the his plan to deputize town police. “How dare they question my right to move on this program,” Cresitello shouted to loud applause. Cresitello told the crowd he supports a national ID card and national work permit program.

Among those who tussled with police during the rally was Diana Mejia, head of Wind of the Spirit, a Morristown-based immigrant support organization, who was forcibly escorted from the lawn of town hall by Morris County sheriff’s deputies as she carried a small sign reading “No Human Being is Illegal.” “I walked in with the sign, and no more than 10 minutes later police started to push me out,” she said. “I didn’t say anything at all. I was a little sad this was all happening.”

Questions
1. Why is the conflict over immigration so heated in Morristown?
2. What were the main arguments against and supporting undocumented immigrants?
On Long Island Attitudes Toward Immigrants Change

Activity: Write a letter to your local newspaper expressing your views on immigration issues.

A. The Hard Life in Migrant Alley

Source: http://www.newsday.com/community/guide/lithistory/ny-history-hs815g,0,7944138.story

They came every spring, making the trip on their own or transported by middlemen known as crew leaders. They toiled six or even seven long days a week under a searing sun, sorting potatoes, picking strawberries or planting at nurseries. At night, they slept on cots in crowded, tar paper-covered barracks usually lacking indoor plumbing and cooking facilities, and where the windows were chicken wire-covered openings and the greasy walls were covered with flies.

This was the scene in Migrant Alley, the nickname for farmland on the North Fork in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In those years, thousands of temporary workers filled about 100 migrant farm labor camps between Huntington and Greenport. Others lived in more traditional neighborhoods that had grown into slums.

The migrants were as essential to Long Island farmers as seed and fertilizer. Agriculture in Suffolk was a $50 million-a-year industry, and even small family farms needed supplemental hands to bring in their vegetables and fruit. Four decades ago, most of the migrants were southern blacks who followed the picking season north and then returned to their permanent homes in the South in late fall to repeat the cycle. Some of the farmhands traveled to Long Island alone or with their families. Others signed up in the South with crew leaders who recruited workers, brought them north, made deals with farmers and handled the wages. The trip north was free; but there was usually a price for a ride home. Each year, migrants who couldn’t afford the return trip remained on Long Island, living in poverty or on welfare.

B. L.I. Clash on Immigrants

Source: Newsday, November 29, 2004

Everywhere Steve Levy went last year in his successful campaign for Suffolk County executive, he said, he heard the same complaints. A new wave of Hispanic immigrants had swept Long Island, and many residents were furious about the overcrowded homes and lines of day laborers they saw in their towns. They told Mr. Levy they wanted action. It is the latest knot in Long Island’s wrenching struggle to digest the thousands of Hispanic immigrants – many of them day laborers – who have arrived in the past decade and at a record pace in the last three years, drawn by jobs in construction and landscaping and other blue-collar work. One result is a commensurate strain on public services like schools, garbage collection and sewer systems in an area where residents pay some of the highest taxes in the country. Communities across the nation – from Mesa, Ariz., to Hoover, Ala., to Freehold, N.J. – have faced similar struggles.

Day laborers have been shut out and demonstrated against, and have become the targets of political campaigns. There has been tension in many villages and cities and violence in isolated spots. But observers and local politicians said that rarely has the fight seemed so bitter or raged so long as on Long Island, where violence has erupted in recent years and Mr. Levy’s proposal is just one of many with support from politicians and residents.
Day-Laborers In Farmingville, NY

Directions: Read the quotes from members of the Farmingville community and answer the questions that follow. Be prepared to share your answers with the entire class.

1. Margaret Bianculli-Dyber, Sachem Quality of Life Organization (SQLO). “My husband works for a large food-distribution warehouse — he’s a forklift operator. Traditionally, they make 20-something dollars an hour. My husband makes $12 an hour. Labor is so plentiful for [the company], they say, “I can just replace you and get El Salvadorans for $6 or $7 an hour.” Now this company made $1 billion in profits last year. They have 300 El Salvadorans working there. Because of a plentiful supply of cheap labor, my husband’s wages are held down.”

2. Anonymous Contractor, Farmingville. “The Mexicans are good people. We just need the labor and they need the work. Last year I put an ad in the paper for Americans. I said ‘let me give it a shot’ and it was a joke. These kids, it was just a joke. They worked for 2 weeks and then they started not showing up . . . That’s why the government isn’t doing anything about it because they know. I mean, history tells you, the country’s built on people with a dream.”

3. Dave Drew, SQLO. “Success would be the removal of all illegal aliens — deportation . . . If the INS wanted to do it, they’d come in in the morning with buses, with document people, remove them all, repatriate them. One-day job. Farmingville would be restored.”

4. Ray Wysolmierski, SQLO. “If the Mexicans come here and have a baby, it’s called an anchor baby. What is happening is our goodwill and tolerance and love are being used against us . . . The whole thing is insane. If they continue to come and have families and grow, we’ll no longer exist as the United States of America.”

5. Eduardo Ruelas, Mexican day-worker. “I came to the United States from Mexico more than four years ago. I crossed the border into Arizona and then spent a month and a half making my way to New York, where I had friends and family who were already living in Farmingville. Although I had a job in Mexico, it wasn’t enough to support my wife and my 2-year-old son . . . When I get work, I make about $60 to $120 a day . . . Before [my wife and son] arrived, I lived in a house with about 10 or 12 other men. In the beginning, I didn’t like my living arrangements because I had to share everything – at times, even my bed. But it had its benefits; if I wasn’t able to work, the others would help me out with food and rent. I did the same for them. It’s not a lot of fun for me to have to get up at every morning at 5, stand on the street corner hoping to be offered a job, and worry that if I do get work it might be dangerous. Although I’ve been lucky, I’ve had friends who have broken their arms and legs and even lost fingers while on the job. None of us has medical coverage. But the hardest part about waiting for work is hearing the insults that are yelled at us by Farmingville residents. The fact that I stand on a corner for work doesn’t make me less human or less worthy of respect. Everyone from the business owners and contractors to the residents with beautifully landscaped yards benefits from Mexican laborers. We do the jobs nobody else will do.”

6. Louise Scarola, Farmingville resident. “As a woman, I feel intimidated. It’s unsettling to walk past 30 or 40 men standing outside the 7-Eleven. My elderly mother no longer takes her regular walks; she’s also changed her shopping schedule so that she can go to the stores when there are fewer men around . . . Today, many [one family homes] are crammed with 25 to 30 Mexican laborers who are forced to sleep on the floors. Normally, the average monthly rent for one of these houses would be $1,500, but I have been told that the laborers are charged as much as $400 to $500 per month each. It’s a situation that is bad for them, and bad for neighboring homeowners. It’s obvious which houses these are; they’re in terrible shape and falling apart. The peaceful Farmingville that I remember no longer exists.”

Questions
1. Why have so many Mexican immigrants moved to Farmingville?
2. What problems do Farmingville residents identify as major issues?
3. How do Farmingville residents describe the day laborers and their way of life?
4. In your opinion how should local, state, and national governments address these problems?
If you work in an urban school in New York or New Jersey the chances are that you will have a very diverse group of students with a range of learning and social needs. Many are immigrants, both undocumented and documented, who are trying to adapt to a new culture and language. Immigration advocacy can be taught as part of civic participation in any social studies class, but especially in government classes. Teaching about immigration advocacy can empower immigrant students and introduce diversity to all students. It also offers a way for students to become involved as volunteers and activists in their own communities.

Immigrants, even undocumented immigrants, are guaranteed certain rights. Many do not know about these rights and tolerate dangerous and unjust conditions. However, there are a number of organizations that help immigrants learn about their rights and support them in struggles to ensure fair treatment. Many are involved in rallying their communities and lobbying local politicians.

Another way that immigrant advocacy programs help immigrants is by holding classes and instructing them in the process for obtaining citizenship. Many immigration advocacy programs also push for legislation and funding for English literacy programs. Some advocacy programs train immigrants to become active citizens who become a voice for the cause of immigrant rights in the community. Many people are unaware that the United States does not have an official language; it is assumed that knowledge of English is required to conduct any official business. But because the United States does not have an official language, legal and public information is supposed to be translated for people who need help, and schools are supposed to provide special instruction.

Another issue that directly affects our immigrants, especially youth, is access to health services. There have been a number of occasions where I have come into contact with immigrant students who are ill-nourished or in need of desperate healthcare. Informing parents about what can be done to help their children can have a dramatic impact on what and how the student learns.

For any grade level, teachers can provide students with a list of problems faced by immigrants or an appropriate reading. The students can discuss the problems, conduct research on legal options, propose solutions, and present their ideas to classmates, the media and public officials. One useful question to examine is “What can be done if an immigrant is being denied essential services or is being threatened with eviction by a landlord?”

Two immigrant advocacy organization websites that provide valuable information for students are:

**The New York Immigrant Coalition (www.nyc.org):** The New York Immigrant Coalition builds immigrant voting power through its nationally known New Citizen Voter Registration Project. It is the largest voter registration project in New York State and the most successful initiative of its kind in the country. The volunteer-run project has registered more than 240,000 new citizens to vote over the past eight years. Its advocacy programs include improving housing conditions for immigrants; challenging workplace discrimination; pushing for systematic enforcement and expansion of labor and occupational health and safety standards; defending civil liberties; and advocating for health care initiatives.

**Promoting Immigrant Voices in Education (www.nypive.org):** Promoting Immigrant Voices in Education (PIVE) believes that informed and engaged parents can raise educational outcomes in immigrant communities and create change within schools. Through collaboration with schools and community groups, it has organized meetings of immigrant parents to educate them on their rights in schools, to help them become more familiar with the structure of the U.S. educational system, and to empower them to become the leaders and advocates within the school community.
**Immigration Debate and DBQ**

by Alan Shapiro

Immigration policy is a hotly debated issue in the country and in Congress, although it moved into the background during the 2008 Presidential election campaign. It is a teachable moment for students to consider the pros and cons of a new policy. The reading provides an overview of a bill that originated in the Senate and the DBQ offers multiple points of view on it. Discussion questions about them and an essay assignment follow. The Document-Based Question exercise should be used as a basis for class discussion. For additional background, see “Illegal Immigrants: Why do they come? What should the U.S. do about them?” and “Should undocumented immigrants have ‘a shot at the American Dream’?” They are available at http://Teachablemoment.org/high.html.

**Introduction:** Immigration policy reform has become a major political and social issue during the past few years. The main reason is the continued flow of illegal immigrants into the United States. Nobody knows exactly how many there are in the country, but the usual estimates are 11-12 million. In 2007, Democrats and Republicans in the Senate drafted a bill that attempted to come to grips with key immigration issues. The bill was detailed, complicated, and more than 300-pages long. Its major provisions called for: greater border security; a new system requiring employers to determine the legal status of all job applicants; an opportunity for most illegal immigrants to become citizens; a temporary worker program; a new system for family and merit-based visas. Political, business, labor, ethnic, and other groups debated for and against each of the bill’s provisions and it never became law.

**For class discussion:**
1. Do the major provisions of the immigration bill seem fair and right to you? Explain.
2. Based on what you now understand about the bill, and on balance, would you support it? Why or why not?

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<th><strong>Immigration Issues</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Border security:</strong> The bill required that the U.S. complete the building of 370 miles of fencing and 200 miles of vehicle barriers at the U.S. — Mexico border. The Border Patrol would gradually be doubled to 28,000 agents.</td>
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<td><strong>Legal status of job applicants:</strong> Under the bill, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security would create a new, foolproof system to ensure that all job applicants are legal. Penalties for employers who hire illegal immigrants would increase to as much as $75,000 and even jail time for repeated offenders.</td>
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<td><strong>Citizenship for illegal immigrants:</strong> It would take at least 13 years for an illegal immigrant to gain citizenship. During this time, an immigrant would have to: register with the Department of Homeland Security; pass a probationary period; apply to become a legal permanent resident; pay a $5,000 fine for entering the country illegally; prove that he or she speaks English; and return to his or her country of origin to file for permanent status and pay fees for various applications.</td>
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<td><strong>Temporary or guest worker program:</strong> A new program would admit 200,000 immigrant workers temporarily for as many as three periods of two years each. Between each two-year period, the immigrant would have to leave the U.S. for one year. Employers would be required to pay these temporary workers the same wage they would pay Americans, but would have to demonstrate that they tried to hire American workers first.</td>
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<td><strong>Family and merit-based visas:</strong> There is a backlog of 4 million foreigners with connections to families in the U.S. who have been waiting, often for many years, to join those families. A point system for future immigrants would be established based on job skills, job history, education, and ability to speak English. During the first years of this program, most of the immigrants would be those with family connections. Gradually, the majority of immigrants would be those scoring highest in merit on the point system.</td>
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Instructions: Read statements A-F and answer the questions. After you have read all the paragraphs, write an essay in response to the task question.

Task Question: Proposed immigration reform bills include many provisions, making it difficult for people to decide whether or not to support it. Using information from the documents and your knowledge of the immigration situation in the U.S. write a well-organized essay in which you compare and contrast different viewpoints on the immigration bill. Discuss your own viewpoint and the reasons for it.

A. [New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson] said that after reading [the immigration bill], he had decided to oppose it, saying the measure placed too great a burden on immigrants - tearing apart families that wanted to settle in the United States, creating a permanent tier of second-class immigrant workers, and financing a border fence. 
Question: Why did Governor Richardson consider the bill uncompassionate?

B. This bipartisan and comprehensive reform package addresses our country’s immigration policy and goes beyond to focus on our nation’s economy and security. This bill has a great deal of balance in it because it enforces our borders first and foremost while ensuring America has the labor force our economy desperately needs . . . To the 12 million people that are here today illegally, this bill provides an opportunity for them to come out of the shadows . . . This consensus bill . . . isn’t perfect. It’s the best solution we could find today.
Source: Senator Mel Martinez (Republican-Florida), http://www.martinez.senate.gov.
Question: Why does Senator Martinez think that the bill promotes U.S. security?

C. The proposal unveiled today includes a massive guestworker program that would allow employers to import hundreds of thousands temporary workers every year to perform permanent jobs throughout the economy. Without a real path to legalization, the program will exclude millions of workers and thus ensure that America will have two classes of workers, only one of which can exercise workplace rights. As long as this two-tiered system exists, all workers will suffer because employers will have available a ready pool of labor they can exploit to drive down wages, benefits, health and safety protections and other workplace standards.
Question: Why does Sweeney think the bill inadequately protects worker rights?

D. Legalization is important for our national security. We have to know who is in the United States. Legalization is important in terms of our economic prosperity. And legalization is important for the families. Do we think we’re going to deport children - 3.5 million American children who have parents that are undocumented?
Source: Senator Edward Kennedy (Democrat-Massachusetts).
Question: What is one reason Senator Kennedy supports the legalization of undocumented immigrants?

E. While smaller employers support tough security measures, they are also worried about being held accountable for the legal status of new hires. Donahue said small-business owners support [holding employers to account], so long as [the law] recognizes the differences between small and large employers. “Getting a $10,000 fine could be devastating to a small business.”
Question: According to Donahue, what worry did small-business owners have about the bill?

F. One of the things making anti-worker . . . policies politically possible is the fact that millions of the worst-paid workers in this country can’t vote . . . Now, the proposed immigration reform does the right thing in principle by creating a path to citizenship for those already here. We’re not going to expel 11 million illegal immigrants, so the only way to avoid having those immigrants be a permanent disenfranchised class is to bring them into the body politic . . . The bill creates a path to citizenship so torturous that most immigrants probably won’t even try to legalize themselves. Meanwhile, the bill creates a guest worker program, which is exactly what we don’t want to do.
Question: What concerns did Krugman have about the proposed reforms?
The first United States census in 1790 revealed a total population of nearly four million people. More than half of the total population was of British, Scottish and Irish descent. In addition, there were 400,000 Europeans from other countries and 700,000 enslaved Africans. More than half of the early European immigrants had arrived as indentured servants, who worked for a period of years without wages in exchange for their passage to and upkeep in America. Immigrants to colonial America were welcomed because of an acute need for labor. After independence, only “free, white persons” were eligible to become citizens. Citizenship was not extended to persons of African descent until the passage of the 14th amendment to the Constitution in 1868.

From 1815 to the start of the Civil War in 1861, five million people moved to the United States, about half from the British Isles, including Ireland. Most sailing ships that brought Europeans across the Atlantic Ocean were overcrowded, poorly ventilated, and without sanitation. At the peak of Irish immigration in the 1840s, about 25% percent of those in steerage died during the voyage. Once in the United States, the Irish faced discrimination because they were Catholic and impoverished. Nativist political parties, such as the Native American Party, also known as the “Know Nothing” Party, opposed further immigration of “cheap working foreigners and Papists (Catholics),” who they claimed were inferior to white, Protestant, native-born Americans. Nativists divided over the issue of African slavery and their political party eventually collapsed.

After the War with Mexico ended in 1848 with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Mexico acknowledged the 1845 annexation of Texas and ceded to the United States a huge expanse of land that included the present-day states of California, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah and parts of Arizona, Colorado, and Wyoming. The 75,000 Spanish-speaking residents of this southwestern territory became citizens of the United States without having immigrated here. Relatives on both sides of the border with Mexico continued to travel back and forth between the two countries to visit and to work.

Prior to the Civil War, three-quarters of the immigrants coming to the United States arrived at the Eastern seaports of New York, Philadelphia and Boston. Those from Asia arrived primarily at the port of San Francisco. Some Asians came for the California Gold Rush that began in 1849. Others, primarily Chinese contract laborers, came to build the western portion of the transcontinental railroad, which was completed in 1869. By 1870, more than 100,000 Chinese were living in California. With the economic depression of 1873, many Americans lost their jobs, and west coast residents blamed the Chinese for the region’s economic ills and declining wages. Nativist sentiment grew, this time against the so-called “Yellow Peril,” the fear of being overwhelmed by a seemingly limitless number of Chinese.

**Initial Immigration Restrictions**

The Immigration Act of 1875 was the first effort to restrict immigration. It excluded criminals, prostitutes, and Chinese contract laborers. This was reinforced by the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. It suspended Chinese immigration for ten years, excluded lunatics, idiots, and those unable to care for themselves, and declared Chinese immigrants ineligible for naturalization. Attempts to exclude Japanese were more subtle and complicated because of Japan’s growing industrial and military power. In 1907, President Theodore Roosevelt worked out an informal understanding with Japan, the so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement,” whereby Japan would voluntarily curb the issuance of passports to laborers. Japanese immigrants were prohibited from becoming U.S. citizens, although this did not apply to children born in the United States. The racialization of immigration and naturalization and its restriction to Caucasians was upheld by the United States Supreme Court in *Ozawa v. U.S.*, 260 U.S. 178 (1922).

With rapid industrialization between the end of the Civil War and 1890, and improvements in ocean travel (steam ships reduced the trip across the Atlantic Ocean from 1-2 months to 8-14 days), another 10 million immigrants arrived on the shores of the United States, most of them from England, Wales, Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia. The Immigration Act of 1891 moved the increasing burden of processing new immigrants from the states to the Federal Bureau of Immigration.
Like the Customs Bureau, it was placed within the Treasury Department. The immigration facility at Ellis Island was built in response to the 1891 legislation. Arriving in America no longer meant automatic entry. Before being admitted to the United States, immigrants had to pass a medical examination and answer questions from federal immigration inspectors. However, only around 2% of all immigrants were turned away.

New Wave of Immigrants

Some 15 million immigrants reached the United States in the relatively brief period between 1890 and 1914, most of them from eastern and southern Europe. These new immigrants--mostly Poles, Russian Jews, Italians, Greeks, Romanians, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Slovaks and Croatians--came for many reasons. They were "pushed" by wars, pogroms, and major changes in European society, including a dramatic increase in population, the spread of commercial agriculture, which caused unemployment, and the proliferation of inexpensive means of transportation, such as steamships and railroads. They were also "pulled" by the need for workers in the United States and the perceived opportunities for work and freedom that the rapidly growing country offered. There was a great demand for laborers to help construct America's cities and railroads, and tasks formerly performed by skilled workers were now being done in mechanized factories with unskilled workers.

By the start of the Twentieth Century, many anti-immigration strands were coming together. The Immigration Restriction League, founded in Boston in 1894 by upper class Boston intellectuals, advanced the notion of a racial gulf between the old stock Anglo-Saxons and the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe. At the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor in 1896, its president, Samuel Gompers, expressed the need "to close the floodgates for hordes of laborers...brought to this country like slaves under contract." In 1903, "insane persons, epileptics, and persons who have been insane within five years previously...professional beggars; persons afflicted with a loathsome or with a dangerous contagious disease...polygamists, anarchists" were added to the list of those no longer welcome. The addition of anarchists was a response to the assassination of President William McKinley in 1901 by an American-born anarchist, son of an immigrant. But these limitations had no real impact on the growing number of immigrants coming to America's shores, and many members of Congress wanted to significantly reduce this number.

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge (R-MA) advocated a literacy test as a way to reduce the number of new immigrants. The literacy test would require new immigrants to demonstrate that they could read a passage of 30 words in English or another language. A literacy test was passed by Congress in 1896 but was vetoed by President Grover Cleveland. Literacy tests were again passed by Congress in 1913 and 1915 but were successfully vetoed by President Woodrow Wilson. The National Association of Manufacturers helped to defeat the literacy bills in order to maintain a supply of cheap labor.

A congressional commission on immigration ("the Dillingham Commission") was created in 1907. The commission issued an extensive report that concluded there was an "oversupply of unskilled labor" and that new immigrants from eastern and southern Europe were harder to assimilate. It recommended a literacy test, a ban on unskilled laborers entering without families, and limitations on immigration by national origin. Even those who rejected the racial undertones of the report supported limiting immigration as a solution to the urban problems of overcrowding, unemployment, low wages, social unrest, and strained social services. The Immigration Act of 1917 defined the personal and economic standards that new immigrants had to meet, including a literacy test. Congress enacted the literacy test over President Wilson's veto.
Post-War Quota System

The American workforce was also in the process of great upheaval. Between 1915 and 1922, more than

To Whom Should We Grant Citizenship?

500,000 African Americans migrated from the South to northern industrial cities, such as New York, Chicago, Detroit, Philadelphia, and upper-southern cities like Baltimore and St. Louis. After World War I, there was direct competition for employment and housing between the African Americans who had moved north and the Southern and Eastern Europeans who were immigrating to the United States. By 1920, new immigrants made up 44% of the population of New York City. After the Russian Revolution, immigration also became associated with radicalism, especially communism and anarchism. In 1919, 500 radical aliens deemed a threat to security were deported and popular sentiment rapidly grew in support of greater restrictions on immigration. In the post-World War I era, the mood in America became very isolationist. Combined with fears of radicals, the perceived failure of the Americanization program, and the recession of 1920, an Emergency Quota Act was passed in 1921 as a temporary stopgap measure. The 1921 law reduced total annual immigration from 800,000 to 300,000.

Nativists, organized labor, some government officials and intellectuals remained unsatisfied. The Ku Klux Klan, reestablished in 1915, emphasized the threat to “white, Protestant America” from Jews, Catholics and foreign-born as well as African Americans. The Klan reached its greatest strength nationally during the early 1920s. Although only a small minority of Americans supported the Klan, many believed that new immigrants posed a problem. Pressure grew for a more permanent immigration restriction law.

A major national debate occurred in 1923-24 over the provisions of the Johnson-Reed bill to impose restrictions on immigration by nationality on a more permanent basis. However, by the end of 1922, the economy had improved and business was now feeling the pinch of a labor shortage again. Wages were soaring. Industrialists and big farmers pushed for more flexibility. The National Association of Manufacturers had a bill introduced that would retain the quota system but permit entry of additional immigrants in periods of labor shortages. Maintaining the racial composition of the country rather than economic considerations became the focus of the discussion. Arguing that new immigration restrictions should attempt to maintain the national origins of the present population, the committee report to the bill concluded that quotas based on the census of 1890 more accurately reflected the hereditary background of the nation than the census of 1910, when the huge wave of immigrants from southern and eastern Europe had already arrived.

National Origins Act of 1924

On May 26, 1924, Republican President Calvin Coolidge signed into law the “National Origins Act.” It limited total annual immigration to 165,000, and reduced the quotas for European immigrants to 2% of the number of foreign-born residents of each nationality in the country in 1890. The National Origins Act not only signaled the end to open immigration from Europe, but also heavily favored immigrants from northern and western Europe who had arrived earlier and severely restricted immigrants from southern and eastern Europe, who mostly arrived after 1890. Influenced by Pan-American goodwill and regional economic needs, the act did not include any restrictions on immigration from the Western Hemisphere. Canadians, Mexicans, and other Latin Americans could continue to immigrate to the United States without limit. Asian immigration was entirely banned. For the first time, the act provided for enforcement, notably visa requirements and border control policies. Visas were to be issued against a particular country’s quota and prospective immigrants

Social Science Docket 28 Summer-Fall 2009
were screened overseas before rather than after entering the United States.

After 1927, the president was to establish the numerical quotas for each country, with a minimum of 100 per country, in proportion to the distribution of national origins in the white population of the United States in 1920. Implementation of the act was postponed twice and did not become effective until 1929. Meanwhile, public support for “100 percent Americanism” began to wane. In the 1928 election, Roman Catholicism and immigration were major issues because, for the first time, a Roman Catholic was the presidential candidate of a major political party. New York governor, Al Smith, the son of Irish Catholic immigrants, ran as the candidate for the Democratic Party against Iowa-born Quaker millionaire engineer/entrepreneur Herbert Hoover, who as Secretary of Commerce had become the Republican nominee. During the 1928 election, patriotic societies, such as the American Legion, the Grange, and the Daughters of the American Revolution, placed ads in newspapers defending the national origins act.

The effects of the National Origins Act could be seen immediately during the 1930s and 1940s. The quota limit for Great Britain was 66,000 a year, while the limit for Italy was 6,000, and for Russia only 3,000. Since there were no quotas for immigration from the Western Hemisphere, Canadians, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans soon became the largest groups of newcomers to the United States. The total number of immigrants plummeted from 700,000 in 1924 to less than 50,000 each year from 1931 to 1943.

**Depression and War**

Massive unemployment during the Great Depression reinforced the view that immigration should be limited. Under pressure by anti-immigration forces, Congress and the administration of President Franklin Roosevelt declined to authorize provisions for refugees trying to escape persecution during the 1930s and 1940s. Eastern European Jews and others pursued by Nazi Germany were prohibited by the 1924 law from entering the United States or limited to a minuscule number. The quota allowed 27,370 German citizens to immigrate to the United States annually, but 300,000 Germans, mostly Jewish refugees, applied for entry permits in 1938. Bureaucratic impediments and anti-Semitic sentiments resulted in the approval of only a little over 20,000 applications. Most Americans opposed admitting large numbers of Jewish refugees.

The more fortunate managed to leave for other countries with more open immigration policies. The less fortunate were left to perish.

Entry into World War II forced the United States to shift its immigration policies to support its allies and its war supply needs. The United States bolstered its alliance with the Nationalist government of China led by Chang Kai-shek by opening immigration and citizenship to Chinese in 1943 (more a symbolic gesture). But, while the doors were finally opened for Chinese to immigrate to the United States, 120,000 persons of Japanese ancestry (two-thirds of them U.S. citizens) were interned in camps in isolated western locations. Even though there were no limits on the number of Mexicans who could immigrate to the United States, 400,000 persons of Mexican descent (an estimated half of them U.S. citizens) were repatriated during the Depression of the 1930s because they failed to enter the country with proper visas or had otherwise violated U.S. laws or regulations.

For more than a hundred years, foreign-born immigrants had been a significant factor in large areas of America, especially in the cities. But by 1945, the number of foreign-born residents in the U.S. had been so drastically reduced that they ceased to play their historic roles. A less pluralistic, more homogeneous society emerged in America in the 1950s.

**Changes in Immigration Policy since 1948**

At the end of World War II, one of the most immediate problems was the estimated 8 million displaced persons in camps in Europe. President Harry Truman responded with an executive order admitting some 2,500 displaced persons that fiscal year. In 1948, Congress passed the Displaced Persons Act that admitted 400,000 Europeans uprooted by the war. Congress also reacted to requests from agricultural interests in the Southwestern states and allowed “braceros,” temporary agricultural workers from Mexico, into the country. In 1953, the Refugee Relief Act admitted thousands more refugees from Europe. The Cold War led to the Refugee-Escapee Act in 1957, which admitted those escaping persecution in communist and Middle Eastern countries. This allowed refugees fleeing Hungary after its anti-Soviet uprising in 1956 and from Cuba after the communist revolution in 1959 to be granted admission to the United States. However, the McCarran-Walter Immigration and Nationality Act, which was passed over President Truman’s veto in 1952, continued the quota system.
Both Republican President Dwight Eisenhower and Democratic President John F. Kennedy attempted, without success, to reform the act.

Major reform came during the presidency of Lyndon Johnson when the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 finally did away with quotas based on national origins and instead set overall limits for immigration from the Western and Eastern hemispheres and focused on family unification, educational background and skills. Congress had anticipated that most immigrants would continue to be European. However, general improvement in the European economy, worsening conditions in Latin America and the war in Vietnam, together with the system of family preference, resulted in greater numbers of immigrants from Asia and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s.

Since 1965, the largest immigrant group has been from Mexico. After Congress eliminated the “bracero” program in 1964, there was a large increase in the number of undocumented (illegal) workers migrating to Texas and California. The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 was designed to address the problem of illegal immigration by outlawing the hiring of undocumented immigrants, requiring employers to verify their workers’ citizenship status, and providing civil penalties. It also offered permanent resident status to undocumented immigrants who could prove that they had lived continuously in the United States since January 1982. This resulted in 2.7 million illegal aliens becoming legal permanent residents. In 1990, responding to the end of the Cold War and the exodus from the former Soviet Union, the total limit on immigration was increased to 700,000 persons a year for 1992, 1993 and 1994, and 675,000 per year thereafter.

In 1996, Congress passed three bills, including the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigration Responsibility Act of 1996, which doubled the size of the border patrol to 10,000 agents, authorized the construction of fences along heavily trafficked areas of the US-Mexican border, and made undocumented immigrants ineligible for most governmental benefits. The immigration laws now permit up to 480,000 family-sponsored immigrants annually, up to 140,000 employment-based immigrants, up to 55,000 diversity immigrants from countries that are not currently principal sources of immigration, as well as a separate category for refugees seeking asylum. Since 1997, the United States has been admitting approximately 900,000 legal immigrants every year. Another 300,000 people illegally cross the borders annually. Although the total number of immigrants (including undocumented immigrants) is about the same as that admitted in 1900, the population of the country has doubled from what it was a century ago. The rate of immigration at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century is about one-third the rate of immigration at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, when it was at its height.

The USA Patriot Act of 2001 placed immigration under the control of the newly-created Department of Homeland Security and the budget for the Border Patrol increased from $1.5 billion in 1994 to $6.3 billion in 2003. There is a waiting list and a preference for skilled workers or professional and close relatives of legal U.S. residents. Most of today’s immigrants come from Asia (primarily China, India, the Philippines, Korea and Vietnam) and Latin America (especially Mexico) rather than Europe.

**Current Immigration Issues**

Unlike the 1920s, current concerns about immigration are focused more on security and illegal immigrants than on a comprehensive immigration policy. In 1990, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (now the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services) estimated that 3.5 million illegal immigrants lived in the United States (about 1.4 percent of the total population), and that by 2000, this number had doubled to 7 million (about 2.4 percent of the total population). The estimate in 2006 was 11-12
million. Although two-thirds of the undocumented immigrants in the United States come from Mexico, many of them remain here only temporarily. Mexico’s population has been exploding (it grew from 60 million in 1975 to more than 100 million in 2000), agricultural production has not keep pace, and many farmers cannot feed their families. The unemployment rate in Mexico often climbs to 25%, forcing many Mexicans decide to cross the border into the United States in search of work.

Should the United States continue its historic position as a haven for immigrants of all complexions, backgrounds and beliefs or should it try to restrict the nature or number of immigrants who are allowed to enter the United States? What should be the basis for restrictions? Should the United States try to select its new arrivals or should we leave it to those who seek to emigrate to select the United States?

One series of issues involves economics. What effect does immigration have on the labor market? While some see immigrants as keeping wages low and creating a burden on the U.S. economy, others argue that immigrants take jobs that non-immigrants are unwilling to do and this benefits the economy. Related to the impact of immigrants on the wage market are the costs of education, health and other services that new immigrants require. Some studies show that immigrants pay more in income taxes and social security than the costs of education, health and social services provided to them. However, the federal government collects most of the taxes while state and local governments provide most of the services.

The American legal tradition assumes the centrality of the family to public and private order. This focus on the primacy and value of the family has permitted family reunification to be used to create exceptions to some of the mandated restrictions. The admission of Japanese war brides of American military men after World War II is an example of the priority of family unification, which otherwise contradicted the legislated restriction of a racial group. The 1965 Immigration Act gave preference to family reunification and has enabled one individual with a visa to bring children, siblings, parents, entire extended families, to the United States through “chain migration,” without any consideration of the country’s economic needs.

**Looking Toward the Future**

Probably the most pressing issues revolve around “back door,” or illegal immigration. Most Americans believe that something should be done about the massive illegal border crossings from Mexico. Possible solutions include enhancing the ability of the Border Patrol to intercept illegal immigrants, the imposition of stiffer penalties to stop employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, improving methods for identifying documented workers, stopping government services to undocumented immigrants (although the U.S. Supreme Court has declared such laws unconstitutional), creating a guest worker program, and increasing economic aid to Mexico.

The Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 enabled 2.5 million immigrants who had entered the U.S. without proper visas or who had overstayed their visas to become citizens. However, it did not stop additional immigrants from arriving in the United States without proper documentation. Nearly half of all undocumented workers came here legally but overstayed their visas. Sanctions imposed on employers who employ undocumented immigrants have also failed to stem the flow of illegal immigration, although such sanctions have, at best, been sporadically imposed. President George W. Bush’s proposal for a temporary guest-worker program is similar to the old bracero program: it created a pool of legal foreign workers for low-paying jobs but would not provide a process for illegal immigrant to ever become citizens and, in fact, would only allow guest workers to stay in the United States for three years.
A final issue involves national identity and membership in the American civic community. Critics of immigration are concerned that immigration is changing the composition of American society and splintering the country along racial and cultural lines because immigrants are not being assimilated into American society. Some want to limit the immigration of people of color and different cultures from Asia, South America and other non-Anglo-Saxon areas of the world because they fear the loss of an Anglo-Saxon cultural and institutional heritage and the existence of a multicultural, multiracial society. But, how much direct control over immigration policies do we want the government to exert? Do we want everyone subject to intrusive border inspections and identification cards in order to keep out those immigrants who we do not want? Are we willing to build and patrol a wall to keep out those who we do not want? We need to agree on what it means to be an American before we can decide who we want to become an American.

More than two-dozen polls in 2007 showed that Americans consistently favored a combination of tough enforcement and earned legalization for undocumented immigrants. Can we devise a system that is fair, satisfies the needs of many businesses for low-cost labor, avoids creating a permanent class of illegal immigrants and pays for the basic education, health care and other social needs of immigrants? Perhaps your students can draft a bill that will accomplish these conflicting goals.

Conflict Resolution and United States History is a two-volume curriculum package from the Colonial period through the Twentieth Century. It includes a CD with primary source documents, overheads, student handouts, maps and illustrations, and a DVD showing middle and high school students role-playing historical figures using conflict resolution skills. In the activity described in the immigration chapter of Conflict Resolution and United States History, students are asked to play the roles of representatives from groups interested in immigration policy (both for and against restrictions) in a meeting with a mediator to see if they can agree on a bill that might address most of their needs and concerns. Jeremiah Jenks, an economist and mediator with background and knowledge of immigration policy, is to serve as the mediator. Those for restrictions in the 1920s included the American Legion, the American Federation of Labor, the Ku Klux Klan and the Immigration Restriction League. Those against restrictions included the National Association of Manufacturers and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce as well as the Federal Council of Churches. After the mock mediation, the class returns to what really happened and compares the results and the consequences. A more detailed description of Conflict Resolution and United States History, an order form, and a sample lesson are available at: http://civiced.rutgers.edu/CONFLICT/CRUSH-OrderForm.pdf.

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Social Science Docket 32 Summer-Fall 2009
Immigration Stories from Ellis Island’s Hospitals
by Claudia Ocello and John Harlan Warren

Try to picture what 12 million people look like. That is more than the population of New York City. Where would you fit them all? What would their faces tell you? Their clothes? Their documents? It defies the imagination. Yet that is the number of immigrants who came through Ellis Island from 1892 to 1954, when the immigration station finally closed. While it is an amazing number, it also takes away the individuality of these 12 million people. They become “immigrants,” an abstraction for a textbook, not individuals who have their own personal reasons for leaving their old homelands for the United States.

Save Ellis Island’s two new curriculum kits, available in the Fall 2008, give a human face on the story of early 20th Century immigration to the US — or, actually two faces. The kits encourage exploration of immigration and migration history as a series of stories: stories of those who navigated through rigorous medical and legal examinations on Ellis Island – sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Each curriculum kit includes authentically reproduced documents from case files that are only accessible by individual research at the National Archives in Washington, DC. These documents reveal the stories of two young people whose immigration to New Jersey is halted by a stop at the Ellis Island hospitals. In addition, the documents link immigration law and regulations in the early 1900s with themes of family, health, and the creation of the American workforce.

Save Ellis Island (SEI) is the official partner with the National Park Service (NPS) for the rehabilitation and reuse of the remaining 29 buildings on Ellis Island’s south side. Once the largest United States Public Health Service Hospital complex in the country, these buildings serviced 1.2 million of the 12 million immigrants passing through Ellis Island. These buildings remain closed to the public since Ellis Island ceased operation as an immigration station over 50 years ago. After a landmark Supreme Court decision awarded 22.5 of the 27.5 acres of Ellis Island to the state of New Jersey in 1998, the fate of those buildings changed. Following a state-initiated study that included public input, a New Jersey task force formed SEI in 2000 as the non-profit partner of the NPS. The goal of SEI is to raise the funds necessary to restore the hospital buildings for the public’s benefit in a manner that would be financially sustainable.

Save Ellis Island (http://www.saveellisisland.org) has raised $31 million to stabilize all the hospital buildings, halting further deterioration while plans proceed for their restoration. In addition, these funds have made it possible to completely restore the Ferry Building and open the new exhibit, “Future in the Balance: Immigration, Public Health and the Ellis Island Hospitals.” The exhibit introduces visitors to the pivotal role that the hospitals played in securing America’s public health and providing state-of-the art care for immigrants who arrived ill or infirm. The Ferry Building and the exhibit are now open for guided tours. The Laundry/Hospital Outbuilding is scheduled to open to the public in 2010, and additional spaces, including a typical hospital ward, a powerhouse, and autopsy theater, will be restored and opened for public tours.

However, for those schools and teachers unable to visit Ellis Island and participate in an interactive, hands-on, curriculum-related school program in the ferry building, SEI wanted to bring the story of the hospitals to the schools. The curriculum kits were researched, designed, and produced thanks to a grant from the New Jersey Historical Commission. SEI wants to provide visitors with an authentic experience about Ellis Island’s forgotten hospitals by using primary sources. These documents, objects, and photographs help students and teachers better understand the work of historians and the historical process, as well as the historical context of immigration in the early 20th century and today.

Maria Giuffrida at Ellis Island

At the age of 19, Maria Giuffrida became one of the 1.2 million immigrants in Ellis Island’s hospitals. Maria came alone from Catania, Sicily in 1908. She was making her way to Perth Amboy to join family already here. However, doctors detained her because after checking her eyes as part of every immigrant’s eye examination, they determined she had trachoma, a highly contagious eye disease that causes blindness.

If an immigrant was detained for medical or legal reasons, a Board of Special Inquiry conducted a
hearing at Ellis Island to decide if the immigrant should be returned to his or her home country. Between 1892 and 1924, 10% of arriving immigrants were sent for a Board of Special Inquiry hearing, and out of approximately 70,000 cases a year, 5 out of 6 detainees were admitted. Interpreters were available for immigrants who could not speak English. The Board of Special Inquiry was comprised of three officials serving as “judges” who worked on Ellis Island. Since immigrants were not legal citizens, there could be no lawyer at the hearing, but friends and relatives – in this case Maria’s father Vito – often did testify on the immigrant’s behalf. U.S. Public Health Service doctors testified whether or not her trachoma could be cured.

The minutes of this Board of Special Inquiry are included in the curriculum kit, along with a medical certificate detailing the Public Health Service doctor’s diagnosis and the length of time needed for treatment. Included in the BSI hearing minutes is a wealth of information about Maria’s family.

During his testimony, Maria’s father petitioned to have her treated in Ellis Island’s hospitals. These clues all contribute to the story. However, Maria’s family could not afford the cost of treatment, and Immigrant Aid Societies on Ellis Island would not help pay her bills. A memorandum shows how much hospital treatment costs per diem: “$1.25 in Ellis Island hospitals.”

Maria’s family posted a bond, allowing her to remain in the hospitals for treatment. Maria spent seven months there, from October 1908 to April 29 1909. The rest of the documents in the curriculum kit show where she ended up in Perth Amboy (#41 Smith Street) and her father’s “Fruit and Con’fy” (Confectionary) store. Through other documents students can trace the family’s move to New York City. Maria is not listed in the 1920 census with her family. Perhaps she married and moved out of her family’s home.

**Llewellyn Black from Antigua**

The story of Llewellyn Black, age nine, brings to light the “untold story” of Caribbean immigration to the U.S. Llewellyn came from Antigua, British West Indies, with Aunt Louisa Gray to live with sister Annie Denton in Newark, New Jersey in May 1913. Llewellyn’s story also included a hospital stay, but with a far different outcome.

Concerned that Llewellyn would not go to school and become a ward of the state, Ellis Island officials ordered him deported. Included in the kit is a handwritten appeal by Llewellyn to the Board of Special Inquiry asking to not be sent back and guaranteeing he would go to school. A cousin set up a bond for Llewellyn, but it fell through. He and his aunt were scheduled for deportation, in her case because she was accompanying a minor. On the day Llewellyn was to be deported with his aunt, he fell ill with measles. Doctors placed him in the Ellis Island hospitals for treatment. Sadly, he died there about one month later. Ironically, this freed his aunt to be admitted to the U.S. as she no longer had to accompany a minor back to Antigua.

Other documents in the kit detail that Llewellyn died of spinal meningitis. The family believed he was not cared for properly. His sister, Gertrude (Annie) Denton wrote a letter to the British Consul General saying, “He was left alone to perish without any treatment whatever but just a little milk twice daily.”

Clearly, family members in the U.S. motivated those still in the old country to make the journey themselves. That story is familiar to many Americans, but the role of health in determining who is admitted rarely attracts attention. Not only did the U.S. want to prevent the spread of contagious diseases, but it also wanted healthy workers who could positively contribute to society. Maria could have worked, as did millions of immigrant women, once she was cured of her trachoma. Had Llewellyn’s family successfully set up a bond, or proven he would not become a ward of the state, he might have been admitted had he not fallen ill.

Llewellyn and Maria and the trail of official documents they left behind reveal the complexity of American immigration in the early 20th Century. Family desires and health issues intersected in unexpected, and often tragic, ways. Laws regulating immigration link directly to family, health and the creation of the American Workforce.

By decoding these documents, students can see a human face in the immigration of the past. Maria and Llewellyn also help them consider the issues they will confront as citizens today. Who will we allow into the United States, and why?
Immigration and the “Consumption” of a Nation
by Andrea Maxwell

Tuberculosis, the disease caused by the *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, has been known by many names. In the past it was called “the great white plague,” in comparison to the Black or Bubonic Plague that claimed millions of lives during the Middle Ages. Today, this highly contagious disease is simply called TB. When it ravaged New York and other industrial cities during the 19th and early 20th centuries it was generally known as “consumption” because of the consumed appearance of its victims. One contemporary described its victims in this way. “The cheeks are hollow . . . the fat of the face being most absorbed . . . rendering the expression harsh and painful. The eyes are commonly sunken in their sockets . . . and often look morbidly bright and staring . . . The body is wasted away. The lungs now sounded hollow, and the cough, known as the ‘graveyard cough’ or ‘death rattle,’ was distinctive and unmistakable . . . The pain in the joints was constant, the pulse accelerated and then became weaker, diarrhea broke out and became uncontrollable, and the legs swelled. All these changes gave a ghostly and cadaverous appearance, indicating that the person had ‘gone into a consumption’ (Sweetser, 72).

During the wave of immigration between 1880 and 1924, public health officials feared the spread of epidemic diseases. By the 1920s, New York City was a hotbed for potential epidemic illness. Thirty-five percent of its population of nearly 6 million people was foreign born. Because of the high demand for labor in the industrializing economy, the original policy was to sift, rather than to restrict immigration.

Poorer immigrants, who arrived in steerage, were required to pass a grueling and often times degrading series of tests at the General Hospital on Ellis Island. Arrivals “walked a line” where their eyes, scalp, throat, and hands were inspected. If diseased, or even suspected of poor coordination, they were marked with chalk on their clothing and sent for further testing, hospitalization, and possibly quarantine. However, the high volume of daily arrivals, coupled with vague interpretations of illness or physical malady, led to poor testing procedures. Afflicted immigrants in the early stages of some very contagious and deadly diseases, including tuberculosis, were often able to enter. This led to a subsequent increase in the rate of outbreaks in tenement housing where the working class immigrants lived in close quarters under very unsanitary conditions.

Those that were quarantined to the Contagious Disease Hospital on Ellis Island after being diagnosed with TB were closely monitored and lived by very strict rules. Patients were allowed to use only specific sinks and slept away from other wards to prevent the spread of infection. Aside from living a prison like existence, most patients were separated from their families and unable speak English. The abruptness of separation contributed to fear that they would be returned to their country of origin.

Contagious Disease Hospital, Ellis Island

In September 1902, *The New York Times* reported on the case of a young Irish immigrant named Thomas Kilroy who was attempting to be reunited with his family but was quickly thwarted by his “delicate appearance.” Slated to return immediately on the ship that delivered him, he pleaded with authorities to allow him to stay in quarantine another week, giving him the chance to visit with his brother traveling from Indianapolis. Compliant with federal immigration law, Thomas’s hospital stay was funded by the steamship
company International Mercantile Marine, until he was deported a week later.

The conditions in the tenement housing and workplaces, were a major reason tuberculosis flourished in immigrant communities. With lungs impaired by dust particles, immigrant workers were vulnerable to TB and other infectious diseases. Families were crowded together in dark interior rooms. Poor medical care and limited access to proper airflow, light, and clean water gave the sick little chance of recovering. Bathrooms were communal and located adjacent to the airshafts that provided ventilation to most of the residents, sending whiffs of human waste instead of the fresh air it was meant to provide. Heating was limited to the kitchen areas where it was provided by the stove.

**Overcrowded Tenement, New York, c. 1900**

A 1900 report by the New York State Tenement House Commission showed why TB was seen as a “poor man’s disease.” Two maps were drawn and placed on top of each other. The bottom marked the location of the tenement houses in New York City, and the top pinpointed cases of tuberculosis. Nearly every tenement house had one dot on it, while some houses contained as many as twelve.

Public health officials sought to improve tenement housing and educate the citizens of New York about the spread of diseases. The Tenement House Law of 1901 required remodeling buildings to increase ventilation and sunlight. Reformers sought to purify water, pasteurize milk, and construct parks for outdoor use. Under the leadership of Dr. Herman Biggs, General Medical Officer from 1901 to 1913, the New York City Department of Public Health conducted campaigns to reduce alcohol use and educate people about the dangers of public urination, spitting, and casual kissing. Spitting was punishable by a fine ranging from $5 to $100.

During the first quarter of the 20th century, education was the primary tool in the battle to stop epidemic diseases. Curricula and picture books were developed for schools and a Christmas seals campaign was launched. One book, *What You Should Know About Tuberculosis* (1925) explained the dangers of bodily fluids and poor health care in language accessible to the average New Yorker. These efforts were considered effective when in October 1922 *The New York Times* reported a 77.9% drop in death rate from tuberculosis over the course of fifty years.

An alternative form of treatment established in the wake of TB outbreaks was sanitarium care. These institutions were usually funded by the wealthy as a place for patients to receive therapy, fresh air, proper nourishment, supervision, moderate exercise, and healthful rest. Often patients fully recovered. Sanitariums also helped to separate the afflicted from the general population. At first, unable to pay for this type of care, most migrant laborers remained trapped in urban squalor where they contributed to the spread of TB. However, in 1875 the Department of Health reopened a hospital on Blackwell’s Island (now Roosevelt Island) where the
indigent could be kept isolated from the general public. In 1896, the Department of Public Health purchased a plot of land in the Shawangunk Mountains of Otisville, New York, about 75 miles north of the city. The elevation there was between 900 and 1,300 feet above sea level, a recommended elevation for the fresh cold air that was necessary to cure the lung disease. These sanitariums were for not meant for advanced cases and availability was limited. Most afflicted with TB were cared for in hospitals where they mixed freely with the general population.

By the second half of the 1920s New York City had a declining number of immigrants. Coupled with the development of antibiotics after World War II, this finally allowed public health officials to get tuberculosis under control. Unfortunately, antibiotic resistant strains of TB have become more and more prevalent over the past decades, hindering the eradication of TB. As the predominant immigrant population shifted from European to Mexican, Haitian, and Asian in the 1980s, the US saw a rise in tuberculosis cases. However, it is important not blame immigrants for the current TB epidemic in New York City. A prominent physician from Oakland, California commented optimistically on the tuberculosis epidemic in 1903, stating that it is a “ministering angel in disguise, for it tends ultimately to force better drainage, better modes of living, more fresh air, sunshine, cleanliness, rest, and recreation” (Adelung 292).

References and Resources
Biggs, Herman M. Brief History of the Campaign against Tuberculosis in New York City (1908).
New York City Department of Health. What You Should Know About Tuberculosis (1910).

Poster, c. 1900. Gardner Association for the Prevention and Relief of Tuberculosis

### How to Prevent Consumption (Tuberculosis) and Other Germ Diseases
**For Children to Take Home and to Read Every Day**

**Don’t Forget These Facts.**

Germs are very small microscopic plants. Germs are found in all Dust and Dirt. Some germs are harmless, others cause disease. Germs cause Consumption. Avoid germs and prevent Consumption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRY TO</th>
<th>TRY NOT TO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRY to breathe through the nose rather than through the mouth.</td>
<td>Try NOT to take a full breath in a cloud of dust.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to fill the lungs with pure air, free from dust.</td>
<td>Try NOT to cough or sneeze in another’s face.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to turn the head away from a person when coughing or sneezing, or hold a handkerchief or hand over your mouth.</td>
<td>Try NOT to swallow what you raise in coughing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to spit out material coughed up from the lungs.</td>
<td>Try NOT to spit upon the floor or sidewalk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Try to spit into a piece of paper or cloth and burn as soon as possible.</td>
<td>Try NOT to cough long without seeing a physician.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to gargle your mouth with salt water or some other mild mouth wash after being exposed to any contagious disease.</td>
<td>Try NOT to kiss a sick friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to clean the nose with a handkerchief.</td>
<td>Try NOT to pick your nose with your fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to keep the hands clean.</td>
<td>Try NOT to eat with dirty hands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to eat clean food and drink pure water.</td>
<td>Try NOT to eat things made dirty by the handling of other persons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to sleep in a room with partly-opened windows.</td>
<td>Try NOT to eat a piece of candy or apple picked up from the sidewalk or street.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to live in the sunshine.</td>
<td>Try NOT to have long and dirty fingernails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRY to be outdoors as much as possible.</td>
<td>Try NOT to drink out of a cup that has been used unless you wash it first.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Social Science Docket 37 Summer-Fall 2009
A Timeline of Quarantine in the United States
Source: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/typhoid/quarantine.html

1738. With smallpox and yellow fever threatening New York, the City Council sets up a quarantine anchorage off Bedloe’s Island (home of the Statue of Liberty) for contagious passengers and crew from arriving ships.

1832. After about 30,000 people in Britain die in a cholera epidemic in 1831-1832, New York mandates that no ship can approach within 300 yards of any dock if its captain suspects or knows the ship has cholera aboard. The disease slips through the safety net, however, killing nearly 3,500 of the city’s 250,000 residents.

1863. New York State’s new Quarantine Act calls for a quarantine office run by a health officer who has the power to detain any ship entering the port of New York for as long as deemed necessary.

1866. The steamer Virginia arrives in New York from Liverpool, its passengers riddled with cholera. Discovering that 35 passengers and two crew have died during the voyage, the city’s health officer orders a swift quarantine.

1892. An Asiatic cholera epidemic reaches the U.S. President Harrison has the surgeon general issue an order that no vessel from any foreign port carrying immigrants shall be admitted to the United States until such vessel shall have undergone quarantine detention of twenty days.

1893. The National Quarantine Act creates a national system of quarantine while permitting state-run quarantines. It codifies standards for medically inspecting immigrants, ships, and cargoes.

1902. The Pan American Sanitary Bureau is established. It is the first international health organization formed in the 20th century that help to bring issues of quarantine and the control of disease to a global stage.

1903. In an attempt to isolate tuberculosis patients, the New York City Department of Health opens a quarantine facility at Riverside Hospital on North Brother Island in the East River.

1916. A polio epidemic strikes New York. Authorities forcibly separate poor children from their parents and place them in quarantine. Wealthy parents can keep their stricken children at home and provide medical care.

1917-1919. During World War I, American authorities incarcerate more than 30,000 prostitutes in an effort to curb the spread of venereal disease.

1944. The Public Health Service Act establishes the quarantine authority of the federal government.


1990s. To help control multidrug-resistant tuberculosis, New York City detains more than 200 people who refuse voluntary treatment, confining most of them to the secure ward of a hospital for about six months.

2001. In the wake of the September 11 attacks, the Model State Emergency Health Powers Act gives states greater powers to quarantine people in the event of a bioterrorist attack involving a lethal microbe such as smallpox.

2004. The Division of Global Migration and Quarantine, part of the CDC’s National Center for Infectious Diseases oversees eight national quarantine stations including one in New York City.
Irish Immigration to the United States
by Thomas O’Connor and Shannon Alexander

Large-scale Irish migration to the United States started in the second decade of the 19th century after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. It was spurred by changes brought about by the industrial revolution that were transforming Europe, Ireland, and the United States. At the beginning of the 19th century the dominant industry in Ireland was agriculture. Large areas of land were under the control of absentee landowners living in England. Much of this land was rented to small farmers who, because of a lack of capital, used traditional tools and methods. The average wage for farm laborers in Ireland was only eight pence a day, the equivalent of earning $3.50 in current U.S. dollars. This was only a fifth of what could be earned in the United States and those without land began to seriously consider emigrating to the New World. At the same time, landlords were often eager to remove tenants because the land could be more productive consolidated into larger holdings and producing food for growing urban centers. However, traditional rules protected the rights of renters, who could hold onto plots and pass tenancy to descendants as long as the annual rent was paid.

In 1816, approximately 6,000 Irish sailed for America. Within two years this figure doubled. Many of the first emigrants from Ireland were skilled workers who helped build the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825, and the other early canal projects. In the New York and New Jersey area this included the network of canals connecting the Finger Lakes to the Erie Canal as well as the Morris, Delaware and Hudson, and the Delaware and Raritan canals. In 1818 over 3,000 Irish laborers were employed on the Erie Canal. By 1826 around 5,000 were working on four separate canal projects. According to one journalist of the period, “There are several kinds of power working at the fabric of the republic - water-power, steam-power and Irish-power. The last works hardest of all.”

Irish immigration changed drastically in the mid-1840s because of the Great Irish Famine. The potato blight destroyed the staple of the Irish diet forcing hundreds of thousands of peasants to emigrate to England, the United States, Canada, and Australia. Unlike the earlier Irish emigrants, these people had few marketable skills, no money, few clothes, and very little hope.

Conditions for many Irish immigrants to U.S. cities in the 1840s and 1850s were not much better than those they left behind. They were crammed into shantytowns, living in shacks cobbled together out of discarded boards and other debris. There were no streets, only paths that turned into ditches after heavy rain. Sanitation was haphazard.

In 1846, 94,484 Irish crossed the Atlantic to America and the numbers steadily increased over the next five years. In 1847, 196,224 Irish came, in 1848, 173,744, and in 1849, 204,771. By 1850, almost one million people living in the United States were Irish born. With the massive influx of immigrants, the population of New York City and Brooklyn changed dramatically. Between 1840 and 1860, the population of New York City increased from 313,000 to 814,000 inhabitants, and the population of Brooklyn increased from 11,000 to 267,000. By 1860, one-quarter of the total population of New York City was Irish born.

Stereotypical “Paddy” and “Biddie” Images

Jobs were hard to find. Employers often advertised their unwillingness to take on the newcomers by hanging out “No Irish Need Apply” signs. Starting in the early 1820s, young Irish women traveled across the Atlantic and were employed by Americans as servant girls. In 1826, 60% of New York domestic servants were Irish born. By 1860, Irish women who came over
to America out numbered Irish men 125 women to 100 men. Irish women who worked as domestics were stereotyped as dimwitted “Biddies,” which was short for Bridget. Irish men, who found unskilled jobs in construction, were dismissed as animal-like and drunken “Paddies.” *Harper’s Weekly*, the most popular magazine of the day, routinely published cartoons lampooning them. *The New York Times* and the *Brooklyn Eagle* regularly printed negative stereotypes. Because of the hostility towards the new Irish immigrants, they disproportionately ended up in jails, workhouses, poor farms, or lunatic hospitals.

Famine immigrants from Ireland were the first big wave of poor refugees ever to arrive in the United States. With no plan or organization to help them, many settled into the lowest rung of society and waged a daily battle for survival. At the time, Boston, Massachusetts, was an Anglo-Saxon city with a population of about 115,000. It was a place run by descendants of English Puritans. In 1847, the first big year of famine emigration, 37,000 Irish Catholics arrived by sea, directly from Ireland, or by land after being deposited in Canada. Irishmen took any unskilled jobs they could find such as cleaning yards and stables, unloading ships, and pushing carts.

In Boston, the Irish were victims of unscrupulous landlords who sub-divided former Yankee dwellings into cheap housing, charging Irish families up to $1.50 a week to live in a single nine-by-eleven foot room with no water, sanitation, ventilation, or daylight.

In an effort to rebuild the close-knit communities they had in Ireland, many Irish congregated in East coast cities where they were slow to assimilate. In New York City impoverished Irish immigrants lived in the Five Points neighborhood, located in lower Manhattan between Mulberry, Anthony (now Worth), Cross (now Park), Orange (now Baxter), and Little Water Street (no longer exists). It was built on swampland. The ground in this neighborhood could not support the weight of the houses and tenements, and eventually the buildings began to sink. The region was infested with mosquitoes and a breeding ground for infectious diseases such as yellow fever.

The sheer numbers of Irish pouring into the United States also meant that Catholicism was becoming the single largest Christian denomination in America, which led to a Protestant anti-Irish, anti-immigrant backlash. In Boston, a mob of Protestant workmen burned down a Catholic convent. Protestant mobs in Philadelphia rioted against Irish Catholics in 1844. In New York, Archbishop John Hughes, on hearing of the Philadelphia attacks, deployed armed Irishmen to protect Catholic churches and a defense wall was built around the original St. Patrick’s Cathedral in the neighborhood now known as Soho.

Following the Civil War (1861-1865), Irish laborers provided the backbreaking labor needed for the enormous expansion of rapidly industrializing America. They worked in factories, built railroads, and mined coal. They were carpenter’s assistants, boat-builders, longshoremen, bartenders, and waiters. In an era when there were virtually no governmental constraints on American capitalism, the Irish organized the first trade unions and conducted strikes for higher wages, shorter hours, and safer working conditions.

Eventually the large numbers of Irishmen eligible to vote in cities such as New York and Boston meant they could be a powerful political force. Many joined the Democratic Party were they organized political clubs along ward lines and then became candidates for elected office. In Boston, newly elected Mayor James Curley announced in 1914: “The day of the Puritan has passed; the Anglo-Saxon is a joke; a new and better America is here.” Curley dominated Boston politics for forty years and helped the local Irish move into civil service and the middle class.

One of the greatest Irish success stories was when John Fitzgerald Kennedy of Boston, the great-grandson of Patrick Kennedy, a farmer from County Wexford who left Ireland in 1849 during the famine, was elected President of the United States in 1960. To millions of Irish Catholic Americans, Kennedy’s election signaled an end to the century-long struggle for full acceptance in the United States.

By the 1960s, descendants of the famine immigrants were leaving the old Irish working-class neighborhoods of Boston, New York, and other cities and settling in suburban developments. There they became part of an assimilated American middle class that had access to mobility into the highest economic and political levels of American society.
No Irish Need Apply

The earliest written version of this popular American song is from 1865. It was part of the oral tradition in both the United States and Canada. Ballyfadd is a small town in southeastern Ireland. The Tribune was a New York City newspaper. “Milia murther” is a Gaelic phrase that means “a thousand murders.”

I’m a decent boy just landed from the town of Ballyfadd;
I want a situation and I want it very bad.
I have seen employment advertised, “It’s just the thing,” says I,
But the dirty spalpeen (rascal) ended with “No Irish Need Apply.”
“Whoo,” says I, that is an insult, but to get the place I’ll, try,
So I went to see the blackguard with his “No Irish Need Apply.”
Some do think it a misfortune to be christened Pat or Dan,
But to me it is an honor to be born an Irishman.

I started out to find the house; I got there mighty soon.
I found the old chap seated; he was reading the Tribune.
I told him what I came for, when he in a rage did fly.
“No!” he says, “You are a Paddy, and no Irish need apply.”
Then I gets my dander rising, and I’d like to black his eye
For to tell an Irish gentleman “No Irish Need Apply.”

I couldn’t stand it longer so a-hold of him I took,
And I gave him such a beating as he’d get at Donnybrook,
He hollered “Milia Murther,” and to get away did try,
And swore he’d never write again “No Irish Need Apply.”
Well, he made a big apology; I told him then goodbye,
Saying, “When next you want a beating, write ‘No Irish Need Apply.’“

Questions
1. Why is the young man angry when he reads the advertisement?
2. How is the problem resolved in the song?
3. In your opinion, is this a realistic solution to the problem? Explain.
4. Based on the song how do you think life was for the Irish when they came to America?
5. Can you think of any other groups in American history that wrote songs when they were discriminated against?

Thomas Nast and the Irish

Thomas Nast was a 19th century political cartoonist. Between 1859 and 1886 he worked for *Harper’s Weekly* magazine. His cartoons strongly supported civil rights for freed slaves and attacked political corruption. They also promoted stereotypes about Irish immigrants to the United States and Roman Catholicism.

**Source:** *Harper’s Weekly*, September 30, 1871
http://www.yale.edu/glc/images/1106b.jpg

**Questions**

1. Who are the people standing on the shore?
2. What do the alligators represent?
3. What point is the author trying to make with the cartoon?
4. In your opinion, is there similar sentiment towards immigrants today? Explain.

**Source:** *Harper’s Weekly*, April 6, 1867
http://www.haverford.edu/engl/faculty/Sherman/Irish/stpats.jpg

**Questions**

1. Who are the people fighting with the police?
2. How are they represented in the cartoon?
3. What point is the author trying to make with the cartoon?
4. In your opinion, is there similar sentiment towards immigrants today? Explain.

**Activity:** Design your own political cartoon defending immigrants to the United States either in the past or today.
New York City was three times the size of Boston and better able to absorb Irish immigrants. Throughout the Famine years (1845-1852), seventy-five percent of the Irish coming to the United States landed in New York. In 1847, about 52,000 Irish arrived in a city that had a total population of 372,000.

On the boats, the immigrants were shoved into jam-packed steerage sections, although they thought they had paid for better accommodations. Sometimes, halfway to their destination, they were told to pay more or risk being thrown overboard.

In New York, the Irish did not face the degree of prejudice found in Boston. Instead, they were confronted by shifty characters and con artists. Confused Irish, fresh off the farm and suffering from culture shock, were taken advantage of the moment they set foot on shore. Immediately upon arrival in New York harbor, they were met by Irishmen known as “runners” speaking in Gaelic and promising to “help” their fellow countrymen. Many of the new arrivals, quite frightened at the mere prospect of America, gladly accepted. Those who hesitated were usually bullied into submission. The runner’s first con was to suggest a good place to stay in New York; a boarding house operated by a friend, supposedly with good meals and comfortable rooms at very affordable rates, including free storage of any luggage.

The boarding houses were actually filthy hellholes in lower Manhattan. Instead of comfortable rooms, the confused arrivals were shoved into vermin-infested hovels with eight or ten other unfortunate souls, at prices three or four times higher than what they had been told. They remained as “boarders” until their money ran out at which time their luggage was confiscated for back-rent and they were tossed out into the streets, homeless and penniless.

During the entire Famine period, about 650,000 Irish arrived in New York harbor. All incoming passenger ships to New York had to stop for medical inspection. Anyone with fever was removed to the quarantine station on Staten Island and the ship itself was quarantined for 30 days. Staten Island was just five miles from Manhattan. Runners were so aggressive in pursuit of the Irish that they even rowed out to quarantined ships and sneaked into the hospitals on Staten Island despite the risk of contracting typhus.

Another way to take advantage of the Irish was to sell them phony railroad and boat tickets. Runners working with “forwarding agents” sold bogus tickets that had pictures of trains or boats the illiterate immigrants wished to board to leave Manhattan for other U.S. cities. The tickets were either worthless, or if they were valid, had been sold at double the actual price or higher.

Questions
1. How were the Irish treated when they arrived in New York?
2. What kind of scams were people running on the Irish immigrants?
3. What were living conditions like for the Irish?
4. How many Irish arrived in New York during the Famine period?
5. If you were a New Yorker during this time period how would you have treated the Irish Immigrants? Why?
Do Irish immigrant girls make good domestic servants?
Between 1856 and 1909 readers of The New York Times and The Brooklyn Eagle debated whether female Irish immigrants made good domestic servants. Angry employers claimed that Irish servant girls demanded too much pay, did not get any work done, and quit without any notice. In response, Irish domestic servants and their supporters accused employers of disrespect and mistreatment. The poor girls were employees, not slaves.

Instructions: Examine the cartoon and read the “Great Irish Servant Girl Debate”. Make lists of arguments condemning and supporting the servant girls. Identify anti-Irish stereotypes used by the writers. Write a letter to one of the newspapers expressing your views on the great debate.

This cartoon was published in the English magazine Puck in 1883. It presents a stereotypical image of the Irish American servant girl (right). She has a masculine appearance and a violent, domineering temper. Her employer (left) is well dressed, feminine, and appears to be afraid of her servant.
Source: http://www.hsp.org/files/irishdeclaration.jpg
The Great Irish Servant Girl Debate

A. “How to get a better house? First, get your house insured- well insured. Then, get an Irish servant girl- preach to her twice about being very careful about setting the house on fire. This will show well in your trial before the Fire Marshall . . . Have plenty of gas lamps for burning fluid; tell the girl to be very careful in the use of them. Of course she will be. But still, it is not impossible that she may trip.” – The New York Times, June 1856

B. “The House Keeper’s Pest – It is not the grocer or the baker, or even the plumber. It is not the kitchen range or the gas or the furnace. It is not the children- it’s the servants. They who should be a help are almost a hindrance.” - Brooklyn Eagle, March 1871

C. “The pest of the household – untrained, inefficient, untidy, untrustworthy, impudent, extortionate, flaunting servants. They come professing to cook when they hardly know the difference between broiling and frying”— Brooklyn Eagle, March 1871

D. “Women expect one poor over worked maid of all work to cook, wash, iron, clean, wait on table and attend the door every day in the week. Not but what a girl can do some of these things part of the time and part of them some of the time, but to do all of the all of the time is impossible.”— Brooklyn Eagle, March 1871

E. “He [writer of a previous letter] must have come from a very dirty part of Ireland when he thinks that all the Irish are dirty. I would be ashamed to say I was Irish if I knew my race was dirty.” – Brooklyn Eagle, March 1871

F. “There seems to be a widespread and antipathy against Irish Catholics, nevertheless there is not a few experienced housekeepers who prefer them above all other, provided they are what they profess to be, and are steady, church going girls.” – The New York Times, 1877

G. “The lady with whom the reporter was conversing said that her friend who was an experienced and careful housekeeper, invariably employed Catholic girls, and would have no other. For her own part, she did not believe that she would ever employ an Irish girl again.” – The New York Times, 1877

H. “I have lived and am living with a family that would not have any other help but the Irish . . . I pity him [previous writer] and send my aid (sic) hat full of sorrow to him for having so much trouble with the Irish. I hope you will publish this letter and show the girls fair play.” – Brooklyn Eagle, March 1897

I. “I know there are many families which suffer the trials set forth by “J.S.G” [writer who put down Irish servants in editorial] in Saturday’s Eagle. But I also know that there are good servants to be had or made, and I have long believed that people who suffer persistently from sudden departure of servants, frequent changes and general incompetence are more to blame than are the girls who desert them.” – Brooklyn Eagle, March 1897

J. “My observation of American women I that they do not want to keep house in any such active way as that, and that the real root of the servant girl problem lies right there. They want to be free from care and worry... expecting thing to get done [their way] because they are paying $20. There are many generous women with money, but very few who ever speak of their servants as if they were fellow human beings.” – Brooklyn Eagle, March 1897

K. “The girls who are coming over this Fall are most of them Irish girls and they are girl whom I like to place because they are honest, good hearted and faithful.” – The New York Times, 1909
DBQ – The Jewish Immigrant Experience in America, 1880-1920
Developed by Bill Hendrick

Historical Context: During the late 19th and early 20th century, millions of Eastern European Jews fled their homes in hopes of a better life in the United States. Some came for economic opportunities offered by industrial expansion. Others were primarily escaping political and religious persecution by unfair governments and hostile neighbors. They hoped the United States would be their land of opportunity, however, the work and living conditions in the United States were often very difficult.

Task: (A) Working in teams, use the information from the documents and your knowledge of social studies to answer the questions that follow each of the documents. (B) Working individually, use the documents and your answers to the document questions to explain why Jewish immigrants thought America would be a better place to live than their countries of origin and the hardships Jews faced when they arrived in the United States.


[I]t is decreed that the Jews be forbidden to settle . . . outside, of towns and boroughs, exceptions being admitted only in the case of existing Jewish agricultural colonies. Temporarily forbidden are the issuing of mortgages and other deeds to Jews, as well as the registration of Jews as lessees of real property situated outside of towns and boroughs . . . Jews are forbidden to transact business on Sundays and on the principal Christian holy days; the existing regulations concerning the closing of places of business belonging to Christians on such days to apply to Jews also.

Questions
1. List two restrictions placed on Russian Jews.
2. In your opinion, why would Russian Jews find these restrictions unjust?

Document 2: Pogroms against Russian Jews. A pogrom was an organized attack, often a massacre, aimed at a minority group living in the Russian empire. Between 1881 and 1917, there were a large number of violent attacks against Jewish communities.

Source: http://grossmanproject.net/pogroms.htm

Questions
1. Approximately how many Jewish communities suffered major attacks in the period 1881-1917?
2. In your opinion, what would be the primary result of these attacks?

Document 3: Excerpt from Mary Antin, The Promised Land (1912)

Source: http://www.historyteacher.net/USProjects/DBQs2000/Mercado-Immigration.htm

In America, everything was free, as we had heard in Russia; the streets were as bright as a synagogue on a holy day. Music was free; we had been serenaded, to our gaping delight, by a brass band of many pieces, soon after our installation on Union Place. Education was free. That subject my father had written about repeatedly, as comprising his chief hope for us children, the essence of American opportunity, the treasure that no thief could touch, nor even misfortune or poverty. It was the one thing that he was able to promise us when he sent for us; surer, safer, than bread or shelter.
Questions
1. Based on her father’s letters, what did Mary Antin expect to find in the United States?
2. In your opinion, were these expectations realistic? Explain.

Document 4: Immigration to the United States, 1880-1919. The United States did not keep records of immigration according to religion. However, between 1880 and 1919, most of the immigrants from Austria-Hungary (which included Poland) and Russia were Jews. Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nation of Origin</th>
<th>1880-1889</th>
<th>% of total immigrants</th>
<th>1890-1899</th>
<th>% of total immigrants</th>
<th>1900-1909</th>
<th>% of total immigrants</th>
<th>1910-1919</th>
<th>% of total immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Austria-Hungary</td>
<td>314,787</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
<td>534,059</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>2,001,376</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>1,154,727</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>182,698</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
<td>450,101</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>1,501,301</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>1,106,998</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions
1. Approximately how many immigrants came to the United States from Austria-Hungary (which included Poland) and Russia from 1880-1919?
2. In your opinion, why might many Americans be concerned about these new arrivals?

The tenements grow taller, and the gaps in their ranks close up rapidly as we cross the Bowery and, leaving Chinatown and the Italians behind, invade the Hebrew quarter . . . In Essex Street two small rooms in a six-story tenement were made to hold a “family” of father and mother, twelve children, and six borders . . . (T)he population . . . has run up the record here to the rate of three hundred and thirty thousand per square mile. The densest crowding of Old London . . . never got beyond a hundred and seventy-five thousand . . . The homes of the Hebrew quarter are its workshops also . . . You are made fully aware of it before you have traveled the length of a single block in any of these East Side streets, by the whirl of a thousand sewing-machines, worked at high pressure from earliest dawn till mind and muscle give out together. Every member of the family, from the youngest to the oldest, bears a hand, shut in the qualmy (stuffy) rooms, where meals are cooked and clothing washed and dried besides, the livelong day. It is not unusual to find a dozen persons--men women, and children--at work in a single small room. Questions
1. What were living conditions like in the New York City neighborhood known as “Jewtown”?
2. Why were living conditions like this?

Document 6: Workplace Discrimination (1907)
Source: The Jewish Daily Forwards, cited in Isaac Metzker, ed. A Bintel Brief
I worked in a shop in a small town in New Jersey, with twenty Gentiles (non-Jews). There was one other Jew besides me, and both of us endured the greatest hardships. That we were insulted goes without saying. At times we were even beaten up. We work in an area where there are many factories, and once, when we were leaving the shop, a group of workers fell on us like hoodlums and beat us. To top it off, we and one of our attackers were arrested. The hoodlum was let out on bail, but we, beaten and bleeding, had to stay in jail. At the trial, they fined the hoodlum eight dollars and let him go free. After that I went to work on a job in Brooklyn. As soon as they found out that I was a Jew they began to torment me so that I had to leave the place. I have already worked at many places, and I either have to leave, voluntarily, or they fire me because I am a Jew.
Questions
1. What happened to the Jewish workers on these job sites?
2. In your opinion, why was there conflict between Jews and other workers?
Document 7: “Life in the Shop” by Clara Lemlich


There is just one row of machines that the daylight ever gets to – that is the front row, nearest the window. The girls at all the other rows of machines back in the shops have to work by gaslight, by day as well as by night. Oh, yes, the shops keep the work going at night, too. The bosses in the shops are hardly what you would call educated men, and the girls to them are part of the machines they are running. They yell at the girls and they “call them down” . . . There are no dressing rooms for the girls in the shops. They have to hang up their hats and coats—such as they are—on hooks along the walls . . . The shops are unsanitary - that’s the word that is generally used, but there ought to be a worse one used. Whenever we tear or damage any of the goods we sew on, or whenever it is found damaged after we are through with it, whether we have done it or not, we are charged for the piece and sometimes for a whole yard of the material. At the beginning of every slow season, $2 is deducted from our salaries. We have never been able to find out what this is for.

Questions
1. What are conditions like in the shops?
2. How do “bosses” treat workers?

Document 8: Sweat Shops

Questions
1. Who is working in the top photograph?
2. In your opinion, what health problems would people working in these shops experience?

Document 9: “Foreign Criminals In New York” By Police Commissioner Theodore A. Bingham (1908)

Source: North American Review

Eighty-five percent of the population of New York City is either foreign-born or of foreign parentage. Nearly half of the residents of the five boroughs do not speak the English language. It is only a logical condition that something like eighty-five out of one hundred of our criminals should be found to be of exotic origin. It is not astonishing that with a million Hebrews in the city, perhaps half of the criminals should be of that race. The crimes committed by the Hebrews are generally those against property. They are burglars, firebugs, pickpockets and highway robbers when they have the courage; but, though all crime is their province, pocket-picking is the one to which they seem to take most naturally. Among the most expert of all the street thieves are Hebrew boys under sixteen, who are being brought up to lives of crime. Many of them are old offenders at the age of ten. Forty percent of the boys at the House of Refuge and twenty-seven percent of those arraigned in the Children’s Court being of that race. The percentage of Hebrew children in the truant schools is also higher than that of any others.

Questions
1. According to Police Commissioner Bingham, what is happening in the Jewish community of New York?
2. In your opinion, why is this problem emerging?
Southern Italians Immigration to the United States
by Michelle Geluso

More Italians have migrated to the United States than any other European group. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there were 15.6 million Italian Americans, more than five percent of the total U.S. population. Over eighty percent of the Italian immigrants were from the southern regions of Campania, Calabria, Apuglia, Basilicata, and Sicily. Emigration from Southern Italy in the 1870 to 1924 period was spurred by poverty, overpopulation, political and economic domination by the north, and natural disasters (including an earthquake, volcanic eruption, and tidal wave). By the late 1920s, there were over four million immigrants from Italy living in the United States, a remarkable figure given that the population of Italy was only about 14 million people at the time.

Southern Italian men were recruited by a hiring system dominated by Padroni (bosses), with ties to mining, railroads, construction, and factories. Recruiting agents were often Italian men in the U.S. who had left their villages many years earlier. Literate representatives or clergymen often wrote letters home for the men in the United States, describing an exaggerated wealth and prosperity that could be obtained.

New Southern Italian immigrants tended to be poor, illiterate, and had little experience in the industrial world. Faced with language and cultural barriers, they depended on their Padrone for employment. Many immigrants fell victim to corrupt and greedy Padroni and this hiring system came under deep scrutiny. Although condemned by law in 1900, an informal version continued well into the 20th century.

Families Left Behind
Initially families did not emigrate together. In the time period between 1870 and 1900, an estimated $600 million dollars in remittances were sent back to Italy. In 1896, a government commission on Italian immigration estimated that Italian immigrants sent or took home between $4 million and $30 million each year, and that “the marked increase in the wealth of certain sections of Italy can be traced directly to the money earned in the United States.” In the twentieth century, when it became more possible for women and men to prosper in the large cities of the United States without the help of a Padrone, there was more migration by entire families.

Southern Italian immigrants in big American cities faced discrimination, swindling, and hardship. The Society for the Protection of Italian Immigrants was a secular organization founded in 1901 to aid in the job placement and maintaining the health of Italian immigrants in New York. It also helped newly arrived immigrants find housing and childcare. The San Raffaele Society was established in 1893 in response to discrimination against Italian Catholics. This was the beginning of the many mutual aid societies established by Italians in the U.S.

A Southern Italian Family at Ellis Island

Italian language newspapers dominated the foreign language news publications in major American cities. People often chose a newspaper based on their union or political views and affiliations. They carried news and information from their homeland, advertisements for jobs and Italian imports. Aid societies published information on social and religious gatherings, employment opportunities, and housing. Literate workers would read aloud to co-workers. Children would read the newspaper aloud to parents each night at home. The best known of these newspapers include
L’Eco (The Echo), the Italian Tribune, and Il Progresso.

Italians were continuously linked to traditions brought from their homeland through weddings, funerals, and popular religious feast days honoring the patron saints of their hometowns. In 1899, Jacob Riis discussed in detail the phenomenon of a patron-saint procession through the streets of New York. Thousands of people joined in the feast, with bands, costumes, and a police escorts.

“One of those agents from the big bosses in America came to Bugiarno to get men for some iron mines in Missouri. The company paid for the tickets, but the men had to work for about a year to pay them back, and they had to work another year before they could send for their wives and families.”
- Rosa Cristofoaro 1884

Italian immigrants banded together to take action against unsafe working conditions and Padrona-style bosses in major U.S. cities. The radical Industrial Workers of the World attracted a strong Italian following. They organized mines in Missouri, cigar factories in Tampa, and granite quarries in Vermont. In 1912, Italian IWW organizers Arturo Giovannitti, Joseph Ettor, and Joseph Caruso were imprisoned for nearly a year on false murder charges.


Nativist feelings and violence convinced many Italians that they would never be accepted in the United States and should concentrate their efforts on returning home. In 1908, New York City police commissioner Theodore Bingham wrote a newspaper article describing Italians as “a riffraff of desperate scoundrels, ex-convicts and jailbirds” and “the greatest menace to law and order.” In 1891, the chief of police in New Orleans was found shot to death. He had been a prominent figure in the investigation of the mafia activity in the city. The mayor blamed local Sicilians and called for the arrest and immediate incarceration of more than 100 Sicilian Americans. Twenty of the jailed men were tried and acquitted of murder. However, before they could be freed, a mob of 10,000 people, including many of New Orleans’ most prominent citizens, broke into the jail. They dragged eleven Sicilians from their cells and lynched them. Italians worldwide were outraged, but the U.S. press generally approved of the action. It was the largest single mass lynching in U.S. history.

The most famous anti-Italian incident was the arrest, conviction, and execution of the radicals Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti. While Sacco and Vanzetti were known radicals and anarchists (as well as draft-dodgers), it could not be proven beyond a reasonable doubt that they had committed the murder they were accused of. Anti-immigrant sentiment culminated in the Emergency Quota Act that limited how many Italians could enter the U.S.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Italian Immigration by Decade</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1851-1860: 9,231 immigrants</td>
<td>1861-1870: 11,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1871-1880: 55,759</td>
<td>1881-1890: 307,309</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891-1900: 651,899</td>
<td>1901-1908: 1,647,102</td>
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The Southern Italian experience differed in one significant way from other immigrants during that time period. Many Southern Italian immigrants never planned to stay in the United States permanently. They were “birds of passage” or migratory laborers who planned to work, save money, and return home to their parents, young wives, and children. Before 1900 an estimated 78 percent of Italian immigrants were men. Many traveled to America in the early spring, worked until late fall, and then returned to the warmer climates of their southern European homes winter. Overall, over a third of Southern Italian immigrants returned to Italy permanently. Dubbed ritornati, some were regarded as heroes in their hometowns. Some returned home to live a comfortable life on a small piece of land that they owned. Others returned home, only to bring their families back to the United States for good.
**Why did so many Italians come to South Jersey?**

This is adapted from a grade level four/five lesson developed by Dana Lewisohn, Joanne Mariani, Maryann Savino, Star Smith, and Sandi Wodakow of East Brunswick, N.J. It is designed to address New Jersey Social Studies Content Standards: 6.1; 6.4; 6.5B2; 6.6D2.

**Do Now:** Show Immigrants video clip (1 minute) from http://www.unitedstreaming.com, *Moving to America: Then and Now.*

**Critical Thinking Questions:** What were the reasons the Italians emigrated from Italy? Why did the Italian immigrants come to New Jersey? What was the impact of immigration on the Italian families?

**Anticipatory Set:** Students will identify the geographic location of Italy, Mediterranean Sea, Atlantic Ocean, and Ellis Island (port of entry), New York.

**Extension Activities:** Have students identify on a map the countries or continents from where their ancestors emigrated. As a class, make a bar graph illustrating the number of immigrants from each country identified.

Much has been written about the suffering and discrimination encountered by the Italian immigrant in the United States, but this must be measured against what they left behind at home in Italy. The immigrant at this time left one thing behind and that was poverty. At home there was unemployment, and underemployment, high mortality, little or no medical care, little or no schooling, poor housing, semi-starvation, rigid class structure, and exploitation. It was a very dismal picture, to say the least. For the average Italian, migration was an opportunity for liberation and the hope for a better life. After all wasn’t the United States supposed to be the land of opportunity where the “streets were paved with gold?”

The year 1871 is considered a starting point for mass migration from southern Italy. In this year, Italy had become a unified nation with a democratic constitution; however, the south had not reaped any economic benefit from this development. Conditions had actually gotten worse. Taxes increased and yet, nothing had been done to stimulate the stagnant economy of the south. The land was not looked after properly. It was not irrigated, trees were not planted to stop erosion and floods, and little was done to improve the quality of the soil. As the land grew poorer so did the peasants. Disease took is toll. Epidemics of cholera and malaria spurred thousands of southern Italians into leaving the country. Along with disease came a mysterious parasite that destroyed most of the grapevines in southern Italy.

Thousands of farmers found themselves without the means to make a living. Traditionally, the south of Italy had always been worse off than central and northern Italy. By the turn of the century it was barely possible to subsist. A few wealthy nobles who lived in the north owned the land. They allowed overseers to run their estates. In many townships water was a luxury. Roads and streets were impassable in bad weather. Winter was short, but it was harsh and the hovels where people lived had no heat. Summers were fiercely hot and accompanied by drought. The peasants were offered terms similar to the sharecroppers of the south after the Civil War.

Italian pioneers came to southern New Jersey for the same reasons that settlers came from New York and New England. They were looking for homes not too far from the seaboard, where the climate was congenial and the land cheap. Southern New Jersey was new territory. Up to 1850 the Pine Barrens were looked upon as wasteland, and they were indeed barren from the standpoint of the dairyman or the grain grower. The climate and the forest, however, attracted a few settlers prior to 1860, when the land was first offered for sale. The Civil War stimulated a demand for fruits and vegetables, for which the sandy soil is specially adapted, and after 1865 the opening of wholesale markets in the large cities made fruit growing a profitable industry. If it had not been for the Italian settlers the vicinity of Hammonton might still be a wilderness.

Charles K. Landis, a Philadelphia lawyer, laid out a town in the Pine Barrens in 1861. He called it Vineland, and to make sure that crops would grow in the sandy soil, he sent to Italy for farmers. Landis knew that Italians were very skilled farmers. He knew that only the most skilled people could make the Vineland soil rich. Italian immigrants headed for Vineland and the adjacent Landis Township in the 1870s. They cleared the land, planted crops, and many became prosperous fruit growers and truck farmers. Immigrants from all parts of Italy, pleased with their new homes, made up 1,400 families of Vineland’s population in 1911.
The West Indians: A Century of Living in New York City
by Joyce Toney

In many ways English-speaking Caribbean people (also known as West Indians) have a similar history to African Americans in the United States. When they immigrate to the U.S. they experience the same political and social conditions as native-born Blacks. Yet this group is also an immigrant group with many of the problems that other newly arrived people face.

The migration of English-speaking West Indians to the United States began with the history of the Americas in the 16th century. The common origin of the two regions in British colonialism led to a constant movement of settlers between colonies. After African slavery became the main method of production in British America, Africans and their descendants were ushered, involuntarily, between different colonies in the region. When slavery was abolished in the English-speaking Caribbean in 1838, the freed people rapidly adopted emigration as a viable alternative to the brutal labor conditions on the islands. Many of those 19th century immigrants played active roles in the struggle for Black freedom in the United States. They include Prince Hall, the founder of Black masonry; John Russwurm, activist and journalist; and Edward Wilmot Blyden, a pan-Africanist leader in the African American repatriation movement.

The West Indian immigrant population grew rapidly at the beginning of the 20th century. Many came from Panama where they were the majority of the workers building the American constructed and financed canal. When the canal was completed in the second decade of the 20th century these workers continued their sojourn to the United States.

Violence and Discrimination

In New York, Caribbean immigrants often faced violence and discrimination. In 1900, an editorial in The New York Times condemned the police for standing “idly by for the most part while the Negroes were being beaten” by a white mob “except when they joined savagely in the sport.” While the police arrested almost no whites, they arrested a number of Blacks who they later “clubbed most unmercifully.” Two hundred Caribbean immigrants with British passports eventually petitioned the British Consul for protection.

When West Indians arrived in New York City they had little choice over where they lived. As people of African descent, they were confined to the segregated areas where African Americans lived. The majority lived in an area referred to as San Juan Hill between 60th and 64th streets and 10th and 11th avenues. At the beginning of the 20th century Black people in New York migrated to Harlem where there was better housing. At the time, West Indians made up about 20 percent of the city’s Black population of approximately 50,000 people.

The presence of African Americans and West Indians in Harlem resulted in a community that was unprecedented in its dynamism. Writers such as Claude McKay, a Jamaican immigrant, joined African Americans such as Countee Cullen, James Weldon Johnson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes to produce a literature that was a major addition to New York’s already vibrant, artistic, and cultural community. This was the Harlem Renaissance, a period of prolific output in all of the arts.

Caribbean Women at Ellis Island, 1911

Most West Indian migrants experienced downward mobility in their occupations after they came to the United States. Teachers became porters, and shipping clerks were accountants at home. During the 1920s, two-thirds of West Indian workers in the United States were manual workers. The men were employed as longshoremen, janitors, waiters, elevator operators, and porters. Women worked as maids, seamstresses and factory workers.

West Indian workers often objected to the discourteous behavior that white co-workers displayed to Black people because they had not experienced such
open racial discrimination at home. West Indians were often pioneers in looking for employment in places formerly avoided by Black Americans. The minor concessions to Black people that the American Federation of Labor made in its craft unions were largely because of West Indian presence in those trades. In 1922, Javan A. Steele became the first licensed master plumber. Hugh Mulzac was the first Black man to receive a captain’s license in the United States. West Indian women, many of whom had been trained as seamstresses at home, entered the garment industry. They played instrumental roles in the growth of the International Garment Workers Union.

A few West Indian immigrants managed to get jobs commensurate with their level of skill and experience. Most professionals were employed as physicians, dentists and lawyers. These were occupations in which they could be self-employed and their services were usually limited to practices in the Black community. Between 1900 and 1930 West Indians were less than 1 percent of the total Black American population, but they comprised over 6 percent of Black professionals.

**Political Advancement**

The West Indian voice in Harlem was loudest in the political arena. Caribbean people were more likely to form radical organizations with links to white Communists and Socialists than native Blacks. Individuals such as Otto Huiswood, Cyril Briggs, Richard Moore, Claudia Jones, Wilfred Domingo, and Hubert Harrison were wedded to lives of activism that often alienated them from the mainstream of both Black and White American social and political thought.

While most organizations sponsored by the Caribbean radicals failed to attract a mass membership, the United Negro International Association (UNIA) led by Jamaican Marcus Garvey was the largest mass movement in the history of Black people with branches throughout the world. Garvey emphasized African pride and a celebration of the race. He espoused Black Nationalism and criticized integrationist organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). When Garvey was imprisoned and deported from the United States he continued his political work in the Caribbean before moving to England where he died. The Garvey movement contributed to the Black Nationalist movement in the 1960s and 1970s and struggles for independence in the colonized world.

Not all Caribbean leaders were radical. Virgin Islander Raymond Jones became the leader of Tammany Hall and Hulan Jack was elected Borough President of Manhattan. Even better known is Shirley Chisholm who was the first Black Congresswoman. Chisholm grew up in Barbados but her commitment was to her constituency in Brooklyn that she represented from 1969 to 1983.

The average Caribbean person in New York lived a quiet life engaged in the activities of their island-oriented benevolent organizations. Because their main motive for migration was economic, people were largely interested in making a living and socializing with friends and family. By the standards of their countrymen at home they were more successful, materially, and they were also better educated. They were also more educated and highly skilled than Whites entering the country at the time. Ninety-nine percent could read or write compared to 75 percent of all immigrants.

**Brooklyn – Capital of the Caribbean**

West Indian movement to Brooklyn is also closely entwined with the history of native Blacks. Both groups faced the travails of racism punctuated by intermittent gains toward racial equality. Blacks had always lived in Brooklyn but their numbers increased rapidly in the middle of the twentieth century. In 1910, Black people were less than two percent of the total population of the borough and in 1940 they were still only four percent.

The early Black population was confined to Bedford Stuyvesant. As the need for housing grew, the available stock deteriorated and more single-family houses were divided into rooms and apartments. This situation coupled with an increase in the number of absentee landlords led to slum conditions. Bedford Stuyvesant deteriorated to such an extent that in 1941 it was cited as the community that most lacked services and resources.

The increased West Indian presence in Brooklyn coincided with improved political conditions for Black people resulting from the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s. Black people continued to face discrimination but they had greater control over their lives as government and other institutions were pressured to address the gross inequalities in the United States. Caribbean nurses and less skilled men and women gravitated to health institutions and hospitals. The pay was relatively good and the unions offered some
degree of security as well as good benefits. These positions also offered the opportunity to move up the economic ladder from nurse’s aide, to practical nurse, and later registered nurse.

Since the beginning of the century, West Indian businesses occupied a prominent position within the Black community. The earliest businesses were small shops located in San Juan Hill. West Indians were less than ten percent of the Black population but they owned 75 percent of the Black owned businesses in the area. Shipping was an especially attractive arena for the budding entrepreneur because people would send packages home. Restaurants and bakeries that featured West Indian specialties also thrived. Success was partly because the immigrants patronized each other.

Because aspiring businessmen were often unable to save enough funds to finance their projects, many joined organizations called Susu or Society (depending on the island of origin) that provided a form of cooperative revolving credit. People used their Susu “hand” to set up businesses, to start savings accounts, to pay college tuition and to place down payments on houses. By the end of the twentieth century West Indians and their descendants had surpassed most racial minorities, and some White groups, in economic advancement. The apparent economic success of the West Indian migrant initiated debate. Scholars differed on the role played by culture, history, or economic conditions.

Newest Immigrants

Since 1965 Caribbean immigrants have moved into New York City in larger numbers as a result of the new Immigration Act. By 1990, the largest group of Caribbean people lived in Central Brooklyn, particularly in the East Flatbush and Flatbush sections. According to the 2000 census the number of West Indians in New York City was 555,000, an increase of 40 percent from 1990.

By the late 20th century there was evidence of a new rising political consciousness among West Indians in New York City. In 1977, the activist Grenadian, Lamuel Stanislaus, organized other Caribbean leaders in support of Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton’s bid for the mayor. In 1980, Guyanese activist, Colin Moore, former State Senator Waldbab Stewart, and Trinidad-born Los Angeles Congressman Mervyn Dymally formed the leadership of a new group, the Caribbean Action Lobby. This organization appealed to ethnic ties as it tried to rally the Caribbean population.

The City Council of New York created the first district with a predominantly West Indian population. Una Clarke, a Jamaican educational consultant, who emerged as the most vocal personality on the local Caribbean scene, was elected in 1991. She was the first West Indian politician to appeal strongly to ethnic, as opposed to racial solidarity. In 2001, Yvette Clarke won the seat formerly held by her mother. In 2006, she won the Congressional seat vacated by Major Owens.

West Indian Carnival celebration

People unaware of West Indian politics in New York may be more familiar with the West Indian contribution to culture in the city. Caribbean music in the forms of soca and reggae pervade the airways. Since the 1980s, the West Indian Labor Day Carnival in Brooklyn has surpassed the official Labor Day parade in Manhattan. It attracts over a million people from all continents and showcases Caribbean culture and New York City’s immigrant community.

Today, most English-speaking West Indians live in Brooklyn, but there are large communities in other parts of the city, its suburbs, and New Jersey. West Indians continue to juggle their position between race and ethnicity, although in recent years they have emphasized their ethnicity to take advantage of the favorable political environment. The ramifications of that decision are still undecided.
“I left my country due to the lack of money and the scarcity of a good education for my family. Back in El Salvador in 1984, there was a harsh war that effected everyone’s families, especially ours. I lost about 10 family members during the war. The people lost that hurt the most were my dad and my older brother. Also there were many earthquakes and floods in El Salvador. They happened constantly. I had to move about three times because every time we moved some type of destruction happened and my house had to be rebuilt. Back then houses weren’t as resistant as today, so my house was always fragile. There was no future for my family because it always has been a poor country. I want to be proud of my family and I always want the best for my family. I felt coming to America would be best for my family.” – A mother of three, undocumented, living on Long Island with her family. She must remain anonymous because of her legal status.

There are currently over one million people of Salvadoran birth living in the United States. For a nation of just under seven million people, this is an astounding statistic. The U.S. is now home to over twelve percent of the population of El Salvador. More than 50,000 Salvadorans live on Long Island, including Nassau and Suffolk Counties.

Research suggests that immigrants from El Salvador assimilate to American culture and society at a much slower rate than immigrants from other nations. In the current political climate with the debate over immigration, the Salvadoran influx raises some serious questions. Perhaps no question is more pertinent than “Why are people migrating to the United States?” The answer lies in the history of El Salvador. It is a history of warfare and exploitation.

El Salvador gained its independence from Spain in 1821. Like many other New World Hispanic colonies, colonists of European decent were able to establish new countries because of a severely weakened Spain. In the late 19th century, laws were passed that allowed for the consolidation of land in the hands of an extremely small European minority. The aristocratic families that came to power were known as Las Catorce. This elite used its control over the government to pass vagrancy laws preventing the majority of the population, which was largely indigenous or of mixed heritage, from leaving the coffee plantations where they worked and lived. These laws left the peasantry, which made up nearly the entire population of the country, securely under the control of the ruling elite. There were four separate revolts by the peasantry against Las Catorce toward the end of the 19th Century. Then, after a prolonged hiatus, the peasants revolted again in 1932.

In 1931, a democratically elected government was overthrown by the military and replaced by a right-wing dictatorship. Leftists and indigenous peasants revolted under the leadership of Farabundo Martí, setting off a brief war. While the rebels killed fewer than 100 people, the military retaliated with great force. It promised to negotiate a settlement and pardons for people involved in the uprising. Government forces lured the rebels into a large public square where between 10,000 and 40,000 people were killed, including Martí. In El Salvador, the rebellion and massacre is remembered as La Matanza (The Slaughter).

For the next fifty years, the leaders of El Salvador were chosen by the military. Often they were drawn from amongst the top officer corps. By 1979, several resistance organizations had formed. While they had different political goals, they shared the desire to bring an end to control of the nation by the land-owning elite and the military. In 1980, the resistance organizations
coalesced into the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN) and launched a guerilla war against the government. The government had the support of the United States, which had been supplying it with military aid for years.

Salvadorans who entered the U.S. arrived without documentation, there is no way to know the exact number of people who settled here.

People have continued to leave Salvador en masse despite the peace accords. One of the primary push factors is the economy of El Salvador, which is still largely agrarian. Although some land was turned over to the peasants after the peace accords and is farmed collectively, these collectives, while sustainable, are largely unprofitable. There is little industry and few alternative ways for people to make a living. Without industry, El Salvador has failed to develop a working urban section or middle class and most of the population remains outside of its cities.

Estimates range from 500,000 to one million people. Some immigrants did receive exile status in the early 1990s after Congress finally acknowledged the danger they faced if they were to return in El Salvador.

The early years of the civil war were times of extreme violence. The military government was guilty of the atrocious war crimes including the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero and the El Mozote Massacre, when Salvadoran armed forces trained by the United States killed at least 1,000 civilians during an anti-guerrilla campaign. Military death squads roamed the countryside terrorizing the peasantry, killing as many as 1,000 peasants a month.

Human rights violations by the military government became so severe that the U.S. threatened to withdraw support if the government did not stop the extreme violence. As a result, during the final years of the war the peasants faced less harassment. Meanwhile, the two sides remained in a relative standoff and attempts at peace resulted in more fighting. Finally, in 1991, the United Nations brokered peace accords between the bitter enemies. The FMLN was allowed to become a legal political party and El Salvador held supervised elections. The country remains at peace today, although it is an uneasy peace that many fear will not last.

The destruction caused by the Civil War was a tremendous push factor causing Salvadorans to emigrate. Half of the refugees ended up in camps in nearby countries, while the other half, usually illegally, made their way to the United States. Because nearly all...
A. Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero. This is from his last sermon before he was assassinated in 1980. Source: http://speakingoffaith.publicradio.org/programs/globalizingthesacred/particulars.shtml

“I would like to make a special appeal to the men of the army, and specifically to the ranks of the National Guard, the police and the military. Brothers, you come from our own people. You are killing your own brother peasants . . . No soldier is obliged to obey an order contrary to the law of God. No one has to obey an immoral law. It is high time you recovered your consciences and obeyed your consciences rather than a sinful order. The church, the defender of the rights of God, of the law of God, of human dignity, of the person, cannot remain silent before such an abomination. We want the government to face the fact that reforms are valueless if they are to be carried out at the cost of so much blood. In the name of God, in the name of this suffering people whose cries rise to heaven more loudly each day, I implore you, I beg you, I order you in the name of God: stop the repression.”

Questions
1. Why did the Archbishop make this special appeal to the military?
2. Why was the Archbishop seen as a critic of the government?

B. Massacre of Hundreds Reported in Salvador Village (New York Times, January 27, 1982). “‘It was a great massacre,’ 38-year-old Rufina Amaya told a visitor who traveled through the area with those who are fighting against the junta that now rules El Salvador. “They left nothing.” Somewhere amid the carnage were Mrs. Amaya’s husband, who was blind, her 9-year-old son and three daughters, ages 5, years, 3 years and 8 months . . . According to Salvadoran newspapers, soldiers from Atlacatl Battalion took part in a sweep through Mozote and the surrounding mountain villages as part of one of the largest search and destroy operations of the war against the leftist guerrillas who are fighting to overthrow the United States-supported junta . . . Many of the peasants were shot while in their homes, but the soldiers dragged others from their houses and the church and put them in lines, women in one and men in another, Mrs. Amaya said. It was during this confusion that she managed to escape.”

Questions
1. According to this report, what happened at this village?
2. Why would events like this one cause Salvadorans to leave their country?

C. Freeport Gang Members Convicted of Racketeering-Murder (Newsday, June 24, 2008). “The name the ‘Missionaries of Death,’ was not just a title within a Freeport street gang. Two members of the Freeport chapter of the Netas street gang, who had that gang title, have been convicted of racketeering-murdering for killing a 20-year-old they mistakenly thought was a member of the rival MS-13 gang, according to federal prosecutors. Amadeo Rodriguez and Christopher Moore, both 24, were found guilty Wednesday in U.S. District Court in Central Islip of the 2001 murder of Giovanni Aguilar. Aguilar, a gardener from Roosevelt who had recently come here from El Salvador, was shot in the head and chest as he sat in a car outside a relative’s house on New Year’s Day in 2001. Aguilar was not a member of the gang, according to his relatives and to trial testimony by Netas who are cooperating with the government. The Aguilar murder was the third in Freeport since 1999 in which a person was killed by gang members after being mistakenly identified as a member of a rival gang.

Questions
1. What happened to Giovanni Aguilar?
2. Why would events like this one cause Salvadorans to leave their country?

D. Statistics (New York Times, April 19, 2009). For children of Salvadoran and Guatemalan immigrants: 64.7% grew up in a family with both parents; 33.7% grew up in a neighborhood with drugs, gangs, and crime; 14.5% received mostly “A” in high school; 24.1% received a college degree; 14.5% of the males have been incarcerated; and 30.9% of the females had a child as a teenager.

Question: According to these statistics, what are some of the problems faced by the children of Salvadoran immigrants?
Marvin: When my mom came to the U.S., she was 19. My mom and her family were poor. In El Salvador my mom helped my grandma sell food. There was a war in El Salvador, and she wanted to get away from it. My mom drove and walked from El Salvador to Mexico with 20-25 other immigrants. She got caught by the Mexican border police. She got stuck there for 3 days, and they were asking her lots of questions. After her release, she was three days without food and water. She had to steal from stores, and she got robbed by thieves. She snuck from Mexico into Texas by driving a car to Arizona. She took a plane to Virginia because her brother lived there. She lived with her brother and worked in Amigos Restaurant because my uncles who lived here already helped by getting her the job. She liked her job, but she got paid only a little. My mom came to America to give her family a better life. I love my mom because she sacrificed many things for me.

Nathaly: When my dad came to the United States, it was kind of weird because first he was walking all the way to Guatemala. Then he went on the bus all the way to Texas. My dad wished he had never come because it was hot, dry, painful, and horrible. It was painful because his legs started hurting a lot. He walked because he didn’t have enough money to ride the whole way to Texas. After he got to Texas, he met some friends, and they decided to go to Virginia. When my dad got to Virginia, he looked for a job to earn enough money to help my mom to come. It took 3 years for my dad to raise the money to help my mom come to the United States. After my dad raised all the money he needed, he told my mom to come and assured her he would pick her up in Texas. My mom finally got to the United States. They were both happy that they were together once again. That’s how my parents got to the United States.

Alex: My mom was 32 when she came to this country. She came here by taking a bus from El Salvador to Guatemala. Then she walked for two days up and down mountains with my uncle. They were afraid they would be stopped and sent back to El Salvador. They got into a car so they could go to the airport, but they were still very worried. They made it, but it took a long time. My mom wanted to come here because she wanted to earn more money. When she got here, she stayed at my aunt’s house in the basement. She got her first job cleaning houses. She earned enough money to bring my brother here from El Salvador.

Mayra: My aunt needed my mom because my aunt had given birth to her daughter, and she wanted my mom to take care of her when my aunt went to work. My aunt sent some money to my mom so she could come to Arlington, Virginia. She left her house in El Salvador at 4 o’clock in the morning and took a bus. They thought they would be able to cross the river to get to Belize, but they couldn’t. They had to go back to Guatemala. In Guatemala they got a car to go to Belize. From Belize, they went to Mexico. In Mexico, they had to hide from the police, because if the police caught them, they would go to jail. They went on another bus, but in the bus they couldn’t sit or stand. They had to lie on the floor so the police wouldn’t see them. Then at night, they had to cross the border of Mexico into the USA. The next day, they went to immigration, and got papers to enter the United States legally. My mom came here sad, because she left her sick parents and my big sister in El Salvador.

Monica: My dad came to the U.S.A. from El Salvador because he didn’t want to be in the war there and kill people for no reason. My dad got to the U.S border by walking. He came with a coyote, whom he paid $500. My dad walked across Guatemala, and Mexico to get to the USA. The bad things were that my dad saw snakes and other animals. The good things were that he saw a lot of places that he’s never seen before, and talked to lots of different people. My dad came here by walking, and sometimes people that drive gave him a ride.
Louis Rosenbaum: Uncovering My Grandfather’s Story
by Carolyn Herbst

This article is adapted from the author’s opening remarks at a program co-sponsored by the American Society for Yad Vashem and The Association of Teachers Of Social Studies / United Federation of Teachers (ATSS/UFT) in New York City on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27, 2008.

My family arrived in New York City, Ashkenazi Jews from Central Europe, at the turn of the last century. Up until very recently, all I knew about my mother’s father was that he and a brother probably came to the United States in the 1890s. They came from a small town in Poland, near Warsaw. However, thanks to tireless research over several years by my cousin, Allen Kurtz, who is a retired New York City junior high school social studies and journalism teacher, our family now has a “revisionist” family history.

My cousin used many sources including Ellis Island, Yad Vashem, and United States government records, Jewish-Gen’s, the Litvak special interest group, all-Lithuania, and Shtetl-seekers databases, and gravestone inscriptions. We also located my grandfather’s citizenship papers and my grandparent’s wedding invitation. My grandfather, known to me as Louis Rosenbaum, and called “Labish” by my grandmother, came from a small town in Russian-held Poland. Originally we did not know the name of the town, but using census reports, gravestone inscriptions, and my grandfather’s petition to become a citizen, Allen found that my grandfather was born in the town of Wielun in Poland. He actually came to the U.S. later than we thought, on December 11, 1904, on the ship Belgravia, from the port of Hamburg, traveling in steerage. According to The New York Times, the ship encountered a strong “hurricane” or “nor’eastar” which was particularly hard on steerage passengers. The article reported that the ship was damaged in the storm, but my grandfather never spoke about the voyage.

The ship’s manifest lists his name as Aryeh Stern, as does his gravestone. Aryeh is Hebrew for lion. He used the name Leib or Labish in Yiddish, which also means lion, and Louis in English. He later took the last name “Rosenbaum” but we do not know for sure when or why. One rumor about the family name change is that my grandfather jumped off a troop train of the Russian Czar’s army, with a friend named “Mandelbaum,” who was killed in the process. The manifest says he was going to New York to join a cousin, Jakob Mandelbaum. My grandparents’ marriage license lists Jakob Mandelbaum as a witness. My grandfather was actually planning to join his brother Sam. Sometime between 1904 and 1906 the family name was changed from Stern to Rosenbaum. Perhaps Sam made the change and he was the one that jumped off the troop train.

Wedding photo of Louis and Yetta Rosenbaum

Something peculiar happened when my grandfather had to register for the United States draft in 1942. He lied about his place of birth, giving it as Schnitkin, which is in East Prussia, instead of Wielun in Poland. Something really scared my grandfather about the draft. Allen believes that conscription into the army in the Russian Empire was a very real threat to young Jewish boys. After the assassination of Czar Alexander II, in 1881, for which Jews were held partially responsible, many young Jewish boys were drafted into the Russian army for 20 or 30 years. Fear of the draft was so intense, that Jewish families hid young boys. Sometimes census records show twice as many Jewish girls as Jewish boys in towns in the Pale of Settlement where many Jews lived in the Russian empire. It is also puzzling that my grandfather did not become a United States citizen until 1923 just before immigration quotas went into effect. My grandmother did not become a citizen until 1940, about the time the alien registration act went into effect. It is possible that lingering fear of the government, of the draft, of using your real name, were a result of experiencing government sponsored anti-Semitism in Europe.
This is the story of my aunt, Badria Mahdy Mabrouk. Badria was born on April 19, 1930. She was born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, as were her parents. Badria was the oldest of nine children; she had five sisters and three brothers, including my father. She described the relationship between her siblings and her as very loving and compassionate. Her relationship with her parents was similar. Badria does not remember ever hearing her father or mother raising their voices to any of their children.

As a child, Badria was very attached to her father. She used to run down to the local cafe and sit with her father and his friends. He would sit with one arm around her, continue his conversation, and at times involve her in the discussion. When it was time for her to return home, he would help her cross the street and send her on her way. Badria recalled that her father never liked it when another family member would try to discipline his children. In fact, she remembered an instance when her father got into a huge argument with his mother-in-law because he found out that she pinched Badria for not helping around the house. Her father was very upset and informed his mother-in-law that she was never to do that again. Badria explained that her grandmother still pinched her if she was bad as long as her father was not around.

An Islamic Childhood

Badria’s family practiced Islam. Her parents were more religious than most of the mainstream Europeanized families in Cairo at the time. Her parents encouraged Badria to follow their faith, but they never forced it upon her. She remembers how happy her father was when he saw her praying on her own. She also remembers that he never pressured her to make it a habit. Badria’s mother was also religious, but she was of the same mind as her father. Badria referred to them as true Muslims, because they understood human nature and understood the true message of Islam, which she explains as moderation without coercion.

Badria’s first year of school was at an institution known as the kuttab; she was the only one of her siblings to attend it. These were religious schools whose purpose was to teach reading, writing, and memorization of the Qur’an. After her first year there, she had memorized three chapters of the Qur’an. Upon finishing her first year, Badria was enrolled in the more “modern” elementary school and entered first grade with her younger sister. Badria’s favorite subjects in school were math and Arabic. She said her early foundation in Arabic gave her a greater knowledge of the language and made her truly love it. In school, she always preferred the company of the older girls. Badria was very fussy in choosing her friends and only spent time with the pretty, popular, and wealthier girls. She admitted that she was a bit of a snob as a child. Despite her love of learning, she only completed up to eighth grade because by that time she was being groomed for marriage. It was decided that as a girl that was enough education, although later her younger sisters would go on to finish college. So Badria engaged in her own education. She read books, magazines, and newspapers on her own and left the housework to her younger sisters. She enjoyed listening to the popular music of the time and as she grew older and her understanding of language increased she became more interested in the work of singers like Um Kalthum, one of the great pillars of Arabic music. By sixteen Badria was engaged and by eighteen she was married.

Coming to the United States

Badria’s husband worked for the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was a smart man and advanced quickly in his position. After five years of marriage, he was moved to the Egyptian Consulate in New York and in 1954, Badria had to leave her family and her homeland for the United States of America. By this time, Badria had two children, a boy and a girl.

Badria came to the United States by boat. She left Egypt on July 23, 1954 the day that Gamal Abdel Nasser took over the presidency from Mohamed Naguib. She still was unsure about how they managed to leave the country with all of that going on, but somehow it was very easy. She said it was the first time she had traveled outside of Egypt. The boat left from Alexandria and made stops in Beirut, Italy, and France before heading for America. On board the boat, Badria met a Greek man who worked on the ship. There had been a large presence of Greeks in Egypt, especially in Alexandria, so Badria, her husband, and the man became friendly during the voyage. The man had been to the United States on several occasions and
he gave Badria her first idea of what America would be like. He told her in America, she would find “very black people” and white people. In America, everything was inexpensive and of good quality. He told her that in America the whole country only spoke English, regardless of the color of their skin. He looked at her children and told her not to worry that the school system was wonderful. Upon arriving in the United States, Badria had very high expectations and expected wonderful things.

The first American Badria met was a secretary at the Egyptian Consulate named Marilyn. When Marilyn first met Badria, she gave her a long embrace, welcomed her to the country and gave Badria her first cup of American coffee. Marilyn later taught Badria how to make this kind of coffee and taught her many things about American culture. Marilyn also helped Badria to learn English. They are still very close friends to this day and speak regularly.

Badria loved the United States when she first came. She remarked how the people all seemed very nice and were always smiling. New York City was actually calm and very clean. After spending a few years, in the United States Badria had five more children. She remarked that the medical care was excellent, and going back and forth to doctors during her pregnancy actually helped her learn even more English. After her youngest child was in middle school, she began to look for work of her own to keep her busy. She easily found a job at the United Nations gift shop. She worked there for eight years and learned how to sell merchandise. However, after the store went under new management she left and worked at a clothing store in Manhattan for another year. In the end, she decided to focus on volunteer programs through UNICEF and other United Nations aid programs.

**American Muslims**

Around the same time, the Egyptian Consulate had lent her husband’s contract out to the United Nations where he would work until retirement at the United Nations library. During this time, they had met a variety of people. As immigrants, they did what all immigrants do, which is to look for aspects of their own culture. They began looking for local mosques and eventually found one on 116th Street in Harlem.

Badria recalled the first time they went to the mosque. The mosque was full of African Americans and there seemed to be a rally of some kind. Everyone in the audience was standing up to tell their story. Badria was shocked to hear about the angry sentiments of this group of people towards the white people in the community. She turned to a woman next to her and asked her why everyone seemed so angry with the whites, what had they done? She asked if the woman thought the whites were even paying attention to all of this talk. The woman looked at Badria, who was fairly dark-skinned, and asked her where she had been this whole time. The woman was very upset that Badria had no idea what they were talking about, but she resolved the situation by not speaking to her anymore. Most of the people Badria interacted with were from other consulates, embassies, and from the United Nations. She had never experienced the prejudice that everyone in the audience seemed to be so worked up about.

Her husband returned to that mosque with a friend from the consulate. That friend, a man by the name of Mohamed Elborai, was also a friend of Malcolm X. He met him, liked him, and started going to hear many of his speeches, but in 1965, Malcolm X informed them to stay away because he feared he would be killed and he did not want them to get hurt.

As time went by the United States entered into a war in Vietnam. Badria thanked God everyday that her sons were too young to be drafted. However, years later two of her children would join the military, one entered the United States army and the other the marines. She still has trouble dealing with the fact that one of her sons was in Iraq fighting and possibly killing other Muslims.

Badria never regrets coming to the United States. She says it was a decision she is still very happy about, she only misses her family in Egypt. That feeling was eased when her brother immigrated to the United States in 1973. Badria highlights the most memorable time in her life as July 4, 1976, the United States Bicentennial. For this celebration, another of her brothers came for a visit in the United States. She remembers going down to the South Street Seaport with them and boarding the Mahrous, the royal boat of King Farouk of Egypt, which had sailed into New York in commemoration of the festivities.
Oscar Palomo: From Guatemala to the United States
by William Palomo

My father, Oscar Francisco Palomo, was born on October 28, 1931, in a little town named San Jose, which is just a few miles north of Guatemala City, Guatemala. His mother owned a small ranch and one of his great pleasures has been making improvements to the ranch over the years. His father died at an early age (he believes at age 28 in a car accident — the car plunged off a cliff in the mountains). His mother became ill with cancer when he was about sixteen years of age, and he spent two sad and trying years looking after his mother until she died. He was a good student, so he took and passed the entrance examinations to the Guatemalan Military Academy. He enjoyed the rigors of military life and playing soccer. He was an excellent player and usually played central defense or fullback on the Academy team. Unfortunately, he had a serious accident and was discharged from the Academy.

After his accident, Oscar drifted aimlessly doing odd jobs. After a couple of years he recovered sufficiently so that he could resume playing soccer. Because he was not as mobile or as fast as he was before the accident, he switched to playing goaltender, a position that requires agility, but not much running or defending against skillful forwards. His best friend from the Military Academy told him about tryouts in Mexico for the professional soccer team Pumas. He was good enough to make the team as a back-up goaltender, but after two years he became frustrated at not playing and retired from soccer.

Oscar got a job with S.M. Frank & Co., a German company with interests in Guatemala (coffee plantations) and the United States. He was considered an administrator, but his “real” job was keeping the plantation workers sober and working. Alcoholism was a huge problem among the workers, who had a hard and bleak life. He describes horrific fights breaking out among the inebriated workers, who used their machetes to bloody effect. It was my father’s job to restore order, and he often feared for his own life. He hated his job, and took a vacation to Mexico at the first opportunity. My mother, who was a primary school teacher in Quetzaltenango, was also vacationing in Mexico. They met, fell in love, and married in 1952. They often argued about the politics of the day.

Guatemala was undergoing a liberal revolution after years of the dictatorship of Ruffino Barrios. My mother was a supporter of the reformers, but my father was extremely conservative, fearing that Guatemala was moving toward “communism.” Today, he realizes that he was a “stupid” young man, and has become much less conservative in his views.

In 1954, the Guatemalan military, with the help of the C.I.A., overthrew the “socialist” President Jacobo Arbenz Guzman. My mother was bitter about this event, but my father’s hero at the time was Castillo Armas, the general installed by the military as the new “President” of Guatemala. After this coup, Guatemala was plunged into a bloody civil war until 1992.

Temporarily Moving to the United States

In 1956, his employer sent my father “temporarily” to the United States because they needed a Spanish-speaking foreman for their factory in Jamaica, Queens. My father loved the United States because of all the opportunities he saw for advancement. The company sponsored him for his Green Card and he began taking lessons in English at the Jamaica High School annex to prepare for his citizenship examination and to find a better job. He was interested in real estate and wanted to obtain a license to become a real estate agent. He achieved both goals, and over the years earned a good living renting apartments to immigrants arriving in Queens. Once in a while he would sell a house, and that meant toys or special treats for my brothers and me. He always kept two cars, a jalopy for everyday use, and a new car that he used only on Sundays to go to church. He has always been a strict Catholic and attends Sunday mass without fail.

My father reminded me that when I was a small child, he would take me to professional soccer games at Downing Stadium on Randall’s Island under the Triboro Bridge. Soccer was an unknown sport in America in those days and you could see great international matches with about ten thousand fans in the stands. We saw Santos of Brazil featuring a young and fantastic Pele in his prime. Later in the 1970s we traveled to Giants stadium in New Jersey to watch a much older and diminished Pele play for the New York Cosmos.
My grandfather, Timothy (Tim) Courbane, was born July 1, 1925 in the village of Cahirlane, in County Kerry, Ireland. He was the oldest of eight children. Tim grew up on small dairy farm and worked at home until he was fifteen. He remembers life on the farm as happy and carefree life. Although they had little money, nearly everything was provided by the farm or could be purchased from neighbors. As the oldest son, Tim worked in the fields and performed daily chores such as milking the cows, taking care of the livestock, harvesting hay for the cattle, cutting peat in the bog to use as fuel to cook and heat the house. For recreation, Tim fished, hunted in the Slieb Mish Mountains, and played Gaelic football.

At the age of six Tim started school at Castledrum National, which was located three miles from the farm. Each student was expected to bring one sod of turf to school every morning to heat the building. If you failed to bring it, you were punished. Tim and the other students generally went to school barefoot. The only time they wore shoes were during the dark dreary days of winter. School was completely dominated by the Catholic Church. A lot of emphasis in school was placed on religion and preparing for the sacraments. Other subjects were neglected. Tim enjoyed school and had very few problems.

Tim attended school until seventh grade when he was thirteen and quit school to help on the farm. Most students left school by fourteen so they could work the family farm or go out and work for other people to make money. When he was fifteen, Tim’s father found him a job working on another farm as a laborer. From the moment Tim got the job, he only returned home for short visits and never lived there again.

Tim enjoyed working on the farm. He stayed there for two years earning three pounds a month, which was a decent wage for a young man. After two years he sought new opportunity on a bigger farm where there was more work and more money. The farm paid 7 pounds and Tim had to work seven days a week for twelve hours a day. While working there, Tim met his future wife Mary Carmody whose family lived on a neighboring farm.

When Tim was about twenty years old, he and Mary decided to get married and took jobs as caretakers on another farm. They received a free house, access to everything they needed on the farm to live, as well as a weekly salary.

After two years they decided to quit the farming business and move to England even though it meant leaving their son with his grandparents. It was very difficult to immigrate at that time because World War II had just concluded and there were strict restrictions on travel. In order to immigrate to England, you needed to provide proof of employment, which Mary found easier to get than Tim. Mary’s brother was already in England and helped her secure work as a domestic. Eventually Tim was able to sign up with a recruiter who was looking for men to work in the underground coalmines of Doncaster and Nottingham. The British government paid all expenses and once you arrived you stayed in a camp where you received three weeks of training. Tim lived in the camp with hundreds of other men, mostly from Poland, Ukraine, and Latvia. These men left their native countries to escape Nazi or Soviet occupation. The camp was well run and conditions in the mines were good, but dangerous. Tim witnessed many men lose their lives.

Mary and Tim Courbane, 1948

After a year and a half, Tim wanted to leave the coalmine and join his wife, who he had not seen in over a year, in London. Since the British had trained
and paid him to be a coalminer, he was expected to stay. The camp held each miner’s ration book, unemployment card, and passport so they could not run away. Tim tried every trick to get out of his contract and finally found an opportunity when the Ministry of Labor made cutbacks in coal production and eased the restrictions on leaving the mines. Men that wanted to go into other trades were allowed to do so.

Tim and Mary lived in England from 1946 to 1956. During this time Tim did factory work and construction and Mary gave birth to a second child, a daughter named Margaret. Tim and Mary were prosperous and happy in England and members of families joined them there. Eventually a sister who lived in New York came to visit and spoke with them about all the opportunities in the United States. Tim decided to go on his own to New York to see what it was like before taking the family to the United States.

Tim Cournane traveled to the United States on the S.S. New York. During the ten-day voyage he bunked on the bottom deck of the ship where he shared a room with fourteen German students. They landed on August 8, 1956 and docked at pier 86. His aunt and sister took him to the Bronx where stayed in his sister’s apartment. Jobs in construction were difficult to find at that time. After a number of weeks, he went to Gaelic Park, which was at the time was a big gathering place for the Irish. There he met the owner of the park, a Kerryman who lived not far from where Tim grew up. This man had a number of connections and soon after they spoke the man got Tim a job in Idlewild (now Kennedy) Airport working for Trans-World Airlines. Tim’s duties were baggage handling and cleaning the planes. Although it was steady work with a guarantee of free travel that would be useful when Tim decided to bring over his family, the wages were very poor. He was making $48 dollars a week, half of what he made in England. Tim decided that he could not live on this salary and provide for his family and decided to move on in search of a better paying job.

Through a friend within the New York Irish community, Tim was introduced to the president of a local union who was also an Irishman. The union, Local 818, was a branch of the teamsters that controlled cold and dry storage in the port of New York. Tim was accepted into the union and started working in the Bronx Terminal Market for the Manhattan Refrigerating Company. Tim drove a forklift, storing frozen food from all over the world to be distributed in the United States. After ten years, he was transferred within the same company to a warehouse on West 14th Street in Manhattan. Tim remained in the union and worked there for nearly twenty years. As he approached retirement the plant was closed and he was sent by the union to work in a cold storage warehouse in Brooklyn.

Once he had joined the union and found a secure job, Tim sought out ways to bring his family over. Mary and their daughter Margaret arrived in New York on Christmas Eve 1957 and the reunited family moved into a Bronx apartment. The neighborhood, which was predominantly Jewish, was beautiful. However, it was close to a Catholic Church and parochial schools. This was important to Tim and Mary because wanted their children to have a Catholic education.

Tim’s first years in the United States were difficult and he often contemplated returning to England. However, as he made connections it was easier for Tim to find work and assimilate. Most of the opportunities he had in the United States were due to networking within the Irish community, while the union provided Tim with job security that made his life possible.

When Tim was preparing to come to this country, he was required to go through a long and difficult immigration process. He had to provide police reports from both England and Ireland, take physical and mental examinations, and have a sponsorship by a family member already in the United States. As an immigrant who came to the United States legally, he is very annoyed at the government because it does enforce restrictions on illegal immigration today.
Using a DBQ to Teach about Immigration in Elementary School Classrooms
by Kevin Sheehan, Jacqueline Bostwick, Anna Feldman, and Christine O’Brien

We recommend Immigration: Stories of Yesterday and Today at http://www.teacher.scholastic.com/activities/immigration/index.htm for teaching elementary school students about immigration. The site includes stories about an eight-year-old boy from Poland who arrived at Ellis Island in 1920, a seven-year-old girl from China who arrived at Angel Island in 1933, a virtual tour of Ellis Island, and interviews with children who recently immigrated.

Historical Background: The United States has always been a nation of immigrants; people who have moved here from other countries for a variety of reasons. Often they made sacrifices leaving their homeland and found few, if any, benefits when they arrived in America.

Directions: The task below is based on documents 1-6. This task is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. Look at each document and answer the question or questions after each document. Use your answers to the question to help you write your essay.

Task: Read each document carefully and answer the question or questions after the document. Then use your answers to the questions, the information from the documents, and your knowledge of social studies to write a well-organized essay in your own words. In your essay you should discuss two hardships faced by immigrants of today and long ago faced in coming to America and one benefit that immigrants of today and long ago found once they arrived in America.

Document 1. Statements about Traveling to America
Most immigrants traveled in the least expensive way in steerage. The steerage area was below the deck on the lowest level of the ship. Originally designed to transport animals and freight, the steerage section was terribly crowded. Several hundred passengers were crammed into steerage with no fresh air. They slept in narrow bunk beds, sometimes three high. The journey to America was originally on sailing ships and could take anywhere from 40 days to six months. The wooden ships pitched and rolled in the high seas and many passengers are seasick throughout the entire voyage. There was constant danger of the ships’ being destroyed in a fierce ocean storm. In the mid-1800s, ship conditions were so crowded and unsanitary that diseases spread rapidly. Thousands died from typhus, called “ship fever,” and cholera. So many people died from these diseases that some newspapers called the ships “swimming coffins.”

Question. Give two examples of the harsh conditions experienced by immigrants traveling to America as described in this document.

Document 2. Housing Conditions in America
Most of the newcomers will be forced to live in dingy six- or seven-story buildings called tenements. They were built by greedy landlords who knew that few immigrants could afford anything better. The tenements were horrible places, lacking clean air and light. Up to thirty-two families are crammed into each of these dwellings. Even the shortest tenement blocks house more than four thousand men, women and children.

Question. According to the picture and document, list two conditions of the living conditions of immigrants.

Document 3. Working Conditions in America

Frequently men, women, and children had to work to support the family. Immigrants often worked in dangerous factories for low wages. Sacrifices were great, but the immigrants had no choice but to work long hours at jobs that others are unwilling to take. Today, most people are paid at least minimum wage at their job.

**Question.** Compared to today, what conclusions can be made about work conditions and salaries for immigrants long ago?

Photo source - http://i45.photobucket.com/albums/f53/midtowng/textilework.jpg

Document 4. Why people left their Homelands

In Ireland a terrible disease in the mid-1800s destroyed potatoes, the main farm crop, - for several years in a row. Because of famine, nearly 2 million people died of starvation and almost as many people left for America. When there was a famine in Sweden in the 1860s, whole villages packed up and came to America. In the late 1800s and early 1900s, thousand of Russian Jews were killed in terrible pogroms, which were massacres often organized by the government and sometimes even by churches. More than 2 million Jews left Russia and Eastern Europe because of these pogroms and other kinds of religious persecution.

**Question.** List two reasons immigrants left their homelands.

Document 5. Reasons Immigrants Migrated to the United States

Many immigrants from the Scandinavian countries of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway were farmers in their native land. They heard there was plenty of fresh air and sunshine on the western prairies and the opportunity to own their own land. The United States government provided 160 acres, or one quarter of a square mile, to any head of a family who would live on the land and farm it for five years. Work in America was hard and wages were small. Still, with enough hard work and a little luck, a person could buy his own home and send his children to school. A home of one’s own! An education for the children! Alexis de Tocqueville, an early French traveler in the United States, wrote: “No wonder that so many Europeans, who have never been able to say that such a portion of land was theirs, cross the Atlantic to realize that happiness.”

**Question.** List two reasons why the United States attracted many European immigrants.

Document 6. Recent Immigrants

Quynh (Vietnam): When my parents decided that we would come to America, they had to give up their businesses, money, and house. For me, I had to say goodbye to my friends, relatives, and most of all, my grandmother. She’s the one that helped me grow up. She made food for us when my parents were at work. She walked to school with us every morning. Now I had to say good-bye to her.

Kauthar (Kenya): We had to leave our friends and family and start all over again. This was difficult at first but got much better as time went on.

**Question.** List two sacrifices that Quynh’s and Kauthar’s families had to make to offer their children a better life in America.
Immigration Oral History Interview Project
by Carolyn Herbst

When I went to Europe for the very first time in 1967, I asked my grandmother, Yetta Ilgowsky, how she physically got from a small town in Russian-held Lithuania in 1904 to New York City. She spent four hours, non-stop, telling me every detail of her trip. She said she immigrated because she was an orphan and had relatives in New York, but almost no family left in Europe. She traveled to this country with her younger brother. They were ferried across a river at night by a boatman who they had to pay in advance. Sometimes you got cheated and he wouldn’t show up, but we weren’t cheated. They took a train trip through Germany, before which they had to take showers, because the Germans said they were un-clean. They finally arrived in Rotterdam in The Netherlands. There they waited by the city hall with other immigrants while they tried to book an appropriate ship. They crossed the Atlantic in second class, not steerage, so there would be a faster medical check-up in their cabin rather than at Ellis Island. In New York, although she was underage, she worked in a garment factory. My grandmother’s age when she immigrated remained unclear. No one in the family ever knew for sure how old she was or when her real birthday was. She never mentioned anti-Semitism as a reason for immigrating. She also did not reveal how or why her family’s last name was changed from Ilgowsky to Davis, one of the great mysteries of our family.

When I visited Rotterdam, I took a picture of the city hall, the only building that was left standing in the city after World War II. When I showed the picture to my grandmother, she said she remembered it, and began to cry. Recently, my cousin found Yetta Ilgowsky’s name on the manifest of the ship named the Statendam, and her records at Ellis Island where she and her brother were detained as unaccompanied minors until they could be picked up by relatives. We believe she immigrated at the age of twelve.

My grandmother’s story was a “gold mine” of historical information, which had never been told to members of our family. As a teacher, I realized that introducing my students to the oral history of their families could be a crucial part of the social studies curriculum and I started doing immigration oral history interview projects every term in both United States and global history classes. I also developed different oral interview projects for classes in government and economics. Each time I did the oral history interview project, I received letters from students, parents, and grandparents thanking me for assigning the project and giving them the chance to share their immigration experience.

Immigration is a major phenomenon in the United States and in much of the world today. Many students in our schools are immigrants or are the children of immigrants. The immigrant experience is an important part of modern life, as well as an important part of global history.

The oral history interview project is based on sound social studies pedagogical premises. It makes social studies more real to students because it involves people they know. It allows people to “connect” with each other and across generations. It allows the interviewer to learn about individual personalities. It enables the interviewer to acquire a heightened sensitivity to time and place, the past and the present. It gives the interviewees a heightened sense of self-worth and of their roles in history. It shows that history includes the stories of ordinary people.

There are two parts of this project: I. Interview and II. Reflection. You may use the interview questions provided, or make up your own questions. You must interview someone who is at least 15 years old, and came here after the age of 10. Younger immigrants may not remember enough, or may not have experienced enough of life to give detailed and thoughtful answers to questions. The person must have come from another country or Puerto Rico.

Our goal is to have a cultural exchange between interviewer and interviewee. You may interview someone of your own cultural background or another cultural background. Interviewing someone from another cultural background will give you an added inter-cultural experience. An older person may be a better interviewee because it will add an inter-generational experience. You may only “interview” yourself if you will be describing an extraordinarily unusual experience such as escaping from a serious political situation or war.

Respect the person’s wishes. You need not give the name of the person or the relationship of that person to you. If the person is undocumented, do not intrude.
beyond the point where the person is comfortable. Emphasize that no one at the school is interested in finding out confidential information.

Your report may be in question – answer format or an organized essay paragraph format without the questions. It can be written either in the first (I did this) or third person (she did this).

**Suggested Questions**
Where were you born? When? When did you come to the United States?
Describe your house and community in the country where you came from.
Why did you come to the United States? With whom?
How did you get here? Describe the journey.
Where did you live when you first arrived? Describe your house and community when you first arrived.
What were your feelings and reactions on your journey, at your arrival, and during your first few months in the United States?
Did you experience “culture shock” when you arrived in this country? What was strangest to you?
How has your life changed since arriving in the United States? Are you glad you came here? Explain.
Do you plan to visit or return to live in your country of origin? Explain.
What do you miss most and least about your native country? Explain.
What else would you want me to know about your native country and your experience as an immigrant?

**Student Reflection**
Did you enjoy doing this oral history interview project on immigration? Why or why not? Do you think your interviewee enjoyed doing this project? Why or why not? What do you think are the most significant things you learned from doing this project? As a result of the interview, what are your thoughts and feelings about the person you interviewed? How did the interview change you as a person? If it did not change you, explain why you think it did not. Would you recommend that other teachers assigned this project? Why or why not?

**Hints for a Successful Interview**
Make a clear appointment for the interview, either in person, on the phone, or by computer. Make the appointment well in advance of the due date of the project. This allows time for the interviewee to get back to you with more information that they may have forgotten about in the initial interview. Emphasize that this is a learning experience. Show the interviewee the rationale found at the beginning of this assignment. Bring paper and pens to take notes.

Don’t expect to tape the interview. Most people do not talk in sentences, and interject a lot of “ums” and “hmmms.” It will take a very long time to play back the tape. Taping can also be intimidating, which hinders spontaneous communication.

Begin by asking the suggested questions. You can also ask your own questions. If your interviewee goes off on tangents, let them. They might reveal unexpected information. If the interviewee doesn’t answer in great detail, encourage more responses by saying, “tell me more.” If the interviewee doesn’t respond with much detail, calmly say, with a smile, “thank you very much for your time,” and then find someone else to interview. Be sure to thank the person you interviewed.

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Discovering the Unsung Heroes of Haiti
by Linda Trimigliozzi

Literature can help secondary school students visualize historical actors, settings, and events. These books about life in Haiti and the Haitian American immigrant experience by Edwidge Danticat can be assigned as outside reading in social studies classes or in a companion English class.

Edwidge Danticat’s novels and short stories provide a passionate voice for the unsung heroes of Haiti. Her protagonists are generally strong-willed, peasant or working women anchored in their heritage, and committed religiously to their faith, which gives them the strength and will to survive. Danticat’s stories do not romanticize the poor, but rather, she uplifts them to a higher place, where the human spirit is not defeated. Danticat stakes out an oppositional and creative space for herself as a writer when she speaks about the violent political reality and official history of Haiti by revealing and exposing examples of evil and treachery.

The theme that permeates Danticat’s stories is a preoccupation with death and the oppression of her people. However, when readers look closer they also see her feelings about immigration, alienation, self-identity, and assimilation in a new country, the United States. Family dynamics and conflicts are at the heart of most stories, especially the forced separation from and reconnection with family.

Danticat is an advocate for literacy and human rights. Without education, Danticat herself would have been enslaved by traditions that oppress and limit options for women. In Krik? Krak! (New York: Vintage, 1996), Danticat examines the human spirit under duress. These short stories shed light on Haitian women who constantly struggle to overcome poverty, who feel a sense of helplessness and powerlessness, and most importantly face abuse and death. Young girls and women scream in horror at the “Bogeymen” who drag them off in the middle of the night to be beaten, raped, and left for dead. Most disturbing, is that the “Bogeymen” are real, breathing, and armed. They walk through the streets in dark clothing and aviator glasses and will steal anything, including someone’s soul.

Brother I’m Dying (New York: Knopf, 2007) is the story of her uncle Joseph Dantica. He was the patriarch of the family and a former minister in the community. After surviving throat cancer, which took away his voice, he was caught in the midst of a clash between neighborhood gangs and Haitian police forces. He fled to the United States when gang members threatened to kill him. When he was detained by Homeland Security at Miami’s Krome Detention Center, he made the mistake of requesting “temporary” asylum. The medical unit, ignoring his pleas, took away his medication, which led to his death. His human rights and dignity were snuffed away.

In her novel The Farming of Bones (New York: Soho, 1998), Danticat recounts the forgotten story of thirty-five thousand innocent Haitians slaughtered by Dominicans on the order of dictator Rafael Trujillo in the late 1930s. During the massacres, Dominican soldiers demanded that anyone with dark skin pronounce “perejil,” the Spanish word for parsley. Haitians did not pronounce it correctly because its trilled “r” did not exist in the Creole language. Once identified, they were marked for death.

Danticat claims her popular and critically acclaimed novel Breath, Eyes, Memory (New York: Vintage, 1998) is not about her life, but it certainly must resemble it. Danticat’s journey took her from Haiti at the tender age of twelve to be reunited with her parents in New York City, just as the novel’s protagonist, Sophie Caco, does. In the novel, Danticat decries the Haitian tradition of testing, where a mother physically checks to make sure her daughter is a virgin before marriage. The “virginity cult” and the mental scarring it leaves is passed from generation to generation by women who were themselves its victims.

What makes Danticat a unique artist is that she is able to discuss the horrors suffered by ordinary people, while respecting their dignity and humanity, and holding out the possibility of hope. Danticat believes by speaking out candidly and forcefully she can help transform life for Haitians in their homeland and in the United States.
Middle School Immigration Museum
This article is adapted from Alan Singer, *Social Studies for Secondary Schools* 3rd edition (Routledge, 2008).

Middle school social studies teachers from the Hofstra University New Teachers Network organize an annual theme-based “Middle School Museum of History” with a weeklong display of student-made exhibits in the Hofstra University School of Education building. The themes for the museum are selected from the New York State human rights curriculum. Recent themes have been the Great Irish Famine and the right to food, Slavery in the United States and the right to freedom, and African American History and the struggle for Civil Rights. A committee of teachers meets and decides on the museum’s theme during the summer and creates lesson materials. They involve their students in planning and creating exhibits as soon as the new school year begins. The displays are assembled at the Hofstra School of Education and students present their work to each other on the Friday before Thanksgiving.

For Fall 2007, the theme was *Immigration to the United States: Past and Present*. One of the reasons teachers selected immigration as a theme was because the United States, New York State, and Long Island where they teach, are sharply divided over recent immigration reform proposals. In conjunction with the museum, teachers developed a series of lessons and projects exploring the history of immigration to the United States and contemporary controversies. A goal of the museum program was bringing together in an academic setting students from different school districts, many of which are racially and ethnically segregated. Students who participated in the program were from very diverse backgrounds. A significant number were either immigrants or the children of immigrants and some of them were from families that are undocumented.

Exhibits at the Museum of Immigration included a chronological (paper) tapestry illustrating the entire history of immigration to the United States; 5-foot by 3-foot “images of immigration” painted on foam board and suspended from the atrium ceiling; tri-board posters and dioramas presenting the experiences of different immigrant groups; readings of oral histories based on interviews with recent immigrants; student made plays presenting the immigrant experience from earlier historical epochs; family artifact displays presenting immigrant cultures; poetry readings and “raps” about immigrant life; PowerPoint presentations; and a debate on the future of immigration to the United States.

Dawn Sumner (Hempstead) had her class research, write, and film a documentary on recent immigrants designed to dispel stereotypes. As they studied the history of nineteenth century immigration to the United States, Bill Hendrick (Queens) and Cherisse Irons (Westbury) had students become immigrants and write journals about their experiences, hopes, and apprehensions. They later compared what they had written with stories told by immigrants who were members of their families or who lived in their community. Richard Tauber and Kiesha Wilburn (Uniondale) had students write poems about the experience of immigrants. Kristin Joseph (Bellmore-Merrick), Birthe Seferian (East Williston) and Lauren Borruoso (Farmingdale) had students create dioramas illustrating immigrant life.

Jennifer Debler (Baldwin) prepared a project sheet to introduce the museum to seventh grade students. Her students worked individually. Adeola Tella (Uniondale) developed ideas for eighth-grade students and an evaluation rubric. Her students were assigned to work in teams. Kristin Joseph (Bellmore-Merrick) prepared an organizer for students to complete as they visited museum exhibits.

Over three hundred middle school students from nine schools visited the museum. Twenty of Eric Sorenson’s high school (Comsewogue) students who were studying about immigration to the United States attended and acted as docents helping teach the middle school students about conditions portrayed in the displays. Exhibits were arranged chronologically so visitors passed through six historical eras: The First Americans (Pre-Columbian Native Americans); Colonial American and the New Nation (1500-1820); New Groups Begin to Arrive (1820-1880); Industrialization and Immigration Transform the Country (1880-1924); Closed Doors and Internal Migration (1920-1965); Doors Are Re-Open (1965 to the Present).

One exhibit that drew particular attention at the museum was a carpenter’s box with an old-fashioned wooden plane that was brought to the United States from Clifden, Ireland, by the great-great-great-grandfather of one of the middle school students.
A. 7th grade Immigration Museum Social Studies Projects
Create a museum exhibit about the early American or modern day immigrant experience. Since grade 7 social studies focuses on America’s beginning until the Civil War time period, please pick a topic that occurred before 1865 or a current events topic. Exhibits can be posters, but “artifacts” and three-dimensional items like dioramas are preferred. All exhibits should include typed “museum cards” explaining the exhibit. Computer slides, videos, and live presentations (plays) are also welcomed. Topic ideas (pre-1865) include:
- Jamestown, Virginia: America’s first successful English settlement was founded in 1607.
- Pilgrims and Puritans: The first English settlers in Massachusetts.
- Africans in British America: The first enslaved Africans brought to Virginia in 1619.
- First U.S. Census (1790): Half of the population of the original thirteen states was of English ancestry. One-fifth of the population was enslaved Africans. The rest were Scots-Irish, German, Dutch, French, Swedish, or Welsh.
- Early European Settlers to New France, New Spain, or New Netherlands
- Naturalization Act of 1795: Restricted citizenship to “free white persons.”
- Alien and Sedition Acts: Gave the President the authority to deport any foreigner thought to be dangerous.
- Immigrant Workers on the Erie Canal: Many were part of the first wave of Irish immigrants to the United States.
- New Immigrants: Famine and war at home and hope for a new life spur new immigrants from Ireland, Germany, and Scandinavia.
- Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848): Ended the Mexican-American War and extended citizenship to approximately 80,000 Mexican residents of the Southwest who lived in areas acquired by the United States.
- Chinese Migrants: Most come as temporary workers. They help build the towns, railroads, and mines in the west.

B. 8th grade Immigration Museum Social Studies Projects
Restricting Immigrants: Research immigration laws from the late 1800s, the 1920s, and the 1960s and proposed changes in the law being discussed today. Create a PowerPoint presentation where you compare and contrast immigration laws in these time periods. Be sure to include excerpt from immigration laws, charts and graphs that explain what was happening at the time, and photographs and political cartoons that illustrate conditions faced by immigrants and the debate over changes in immigration laws.
- Musical Diary: Assemble a collection of song lyrics that document the experience of immigrants before they leave their countries of origin and in the United States. Use PowerPoint and includes the songs plus photographs or drawings that illustrate the things described in the songs.
- Diorama: Create a three-dimensional depiction of the immigrant experience. Possibilities include arrival at Ellis Island, ethnic neighborhoods, the Statue of Liberty, images of the American Dream, working conditions, and life in tenements. Every diorama must include a museum card. A museum card is a brief report describing the scene in the diorama and explaining its historical importance.

C. Current Events Topic Ideas
Family Artifacts: Present real or “created” artifacts representing your family’s culture and tell the story behind the artifact.
- Immigration Trunk: Create a trunk or suitcase of items brought to the United States by recent immigrants.
- Newest Immigrants: Write a report and create a display about a recent immigrant group.
- An Immigrants Story: Interview someone you know about his or her first hand experience as an immigrant. Include pictures with your report.
- Local Immigration Issues: Use newspaper articles to prepare a report on how immigrants live and work.
- Preserving their Culture: Report on how immigrants try to preserve their culture once they have arrived in the United States.
Teaching about Immigration Using Activities and Picture Books
by Jeannette Balantic, Jonie Kipling, and Andrea Libresco

This article is the second in a series “Every Book is a Social Studies Book.” The next article will be on picture books that can be used to teach about citizenship. If you have picture books you love that you believe are excellent vehicles for the teaching of immigration or citizenship email Andrea.Libresco@hofstra.edu.

Whether exploring family history in first grade or doing an entire unit on immigration in fourth or fifth grade, every student is taught about immigration at some point in elementary school. Many teachers have developed activities where students share ethnic foods, pose questions to relatives and perhaps take a real or virtual tour of Ellis Island. While students may have fun doing these activities, it is important to bear in mind that these activities are not an end in themselves; rather, they provide teachers with an opportunity to have students grapple with questions at the very heart of the immigrant and the American experience:

• Are immigrant experiences more similar or different? Is there a typical immigrant experience?
• What does it mean to be American? Do people have to change to become Americans? Should they have to?
• How important have the contributions of immigrants been in shaping American society?

There are myriad topics to explore in immigration: factors that push people to leave their countries and pull them to America; difficulties of the journey; processing at Ellis and Angel Islands and by government today; life in and out of ghettos; ways in which the work of immigrants has built America; discrimination against immigrants by community members, employers, and government at different times; and the special circumstances of refugees and their needs upon arrival. Every one of these topics is addressed in the plethora of picture books that explore immigration.

While picture books can be supplemented with other sources, it is also the case that many of those sources – photographs, oral histories, recipes, quotes, cartoons, and timelines – are an integral part of many of the picture books. The activities and suggested books will enable teachers to go deeper and elicit more upper-level thinking from their students, so that they can come away with a more complete picture of the varied immigrant experiences across time and cultures.

Doing Oral History

Conducting and analyzing oral histories help develop the literacy skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as the social studies skills of inquiry and historical investigation. Engaging students in the development of the questions they will ask to uncover immigrant stories is a critical component in conducting a rich oral history. However, students cannot develop these questions alone; they need materials and guided support in this work.

Reading both fiction and non-fiction picture books about immigration helps students work backward to figure out the questions that elicited those stories. Students who read about Mei Mei’s experience in I Hate English (by Ellen Levine) will discover new questions they can ask in their own immigrant interviews. These may include: Describe your experience in school in America. How did children treat you? What is your best and worst memory of being in a new school? What would have made school life easier for you? As they read more books, students can generate more categories of questions to ask, such as questions about the journey to America, work experiences, school life, and family traditions.

After compiling questions, students need modeling and practice in conducting oral history interviews. We have conducted mock interviews with colleagues where students give input and feedback. Sometimes our mock interviewee is prepped to give too-brief answers or to go off on tangents. Students brainstorm ways to elicit the information they seek.

Small groups of students conduct immigrant interviews and write up a brief oral history. Once completed, students share and analyze the experiences of the people whom they interviewed. Their responses can be recorded on a big chart displayed in the classroom so that students can discuss the similarities and differences of immigrant experiences. The different sources examined on the chart may include: Oral histories from classmates, family members, classroom visitors, the Ellis Island website, or a character from a work of historical fiction. The categories of analysis include: Reasons for coming to America; year of arrival; experiences on the journey and upon arrival; experiences during the first few years; sacrifices, adjustments, and benefits, occu-
ations; neighborhoods; and contributions. Questions to aid in analysis of the chart may include: What factors account for the differences? Are immigrant experiences in the 19th century more similar or different from immigrant experiences in the late 20th and early 21st centuries? How important have the contributions of immigrants been in shaping American economics and culture?

Exploring What it Means to be American

Many wonderful picture books lend themselves to a discussion about the difficulties immigrants face as they straddle two cultures, that of their homeland and their adopted land, the United States. Students can select any one of the books below in preparation for discussion about issues immigrants contend with as they adjust to being in America.

Aliki. *Marianthe’s Story: Painted Words and Spoken Memories.* Two stories show the difficulties a child faces when coming to a new land.

Bunting, Eve. *Going Home.* Carlos and his family visit the family village in Mexico.

Bunting, Eve. *One Green Apple.* A Muslim girl’s head scarf sets her apart in school with varied reactions from classmates.

Choi, Yangsook. *The Name Jar.* A Korean girl is teased about her name.

Cohen, Barbara. *Molly’s Pilgrim.* A Russian immigrant girl finds parallels in her immigrant experience and that of the experience of the Pilgrims.

Fleming, Candace. *Lowji Discovers America.* A nine-year-old East Indian boy adjusts to suburban U.S.

Garland, Sherry. *The Lotus Seed.* A Vietnamese immigrant woman plants a lotus seed to bring her traditions to her new home.

Hall, Bruce. *Henry and the Kite Dragon.* Chinese and Italian immigrant children learn they share more than just the sky.

Hoffman, Mary. *The Color of Home.* A recent immigrant from Somalia is homesick on his first day of school in America.

Kim, Jong Un. *Sumi’s First Day of School.* A Korean American child is afraid when she starts school until a kind teacher and classmate reach out to her.


Lawlor, Veronica. *I was Dreaming to Come to America.* Immigrants recount their reasons for and experiences in making the trip to America.

Levine, Ellen. *I Hate English.* When her family moves to New York from Hong Kong, Mei Mei finds it difficult to adjust to school and learn the alien sounds of English.

Nones, Susan Miho. *The Last Dragon.* In Chinatown, a boy feels alienated until he discovers a worn-out dragon and gets neighborhood people to repair it.

Perez, Amada. *My Diary from Here to There/Mi diario de aqui hasta alla.* Amada is anxious about her family’s move from Mexico to L.A.


Say, Allen. *Grandfather’s Journey.* A Japanese American recounts his grandfather’s trip to America and feelings of being torn between two countries.

Say, Allen. *How My Parents Learned to Eat.* An American sailor courts a Japanese woman and each tries to learn the other’s way of eating.


Wong, Janet. *Apple Pie Fourth of July.* A Chinese American girl worries that no one will want her parents’ Chinese food on July 4th.

Yang, Belle. *Hannah is my Name: A Young Immigrant’s Story.* Hannah takes a new name and adjusts to a new life, as the family awaits green cards that mean they can stay.

Yin. *Coolies and Brothers.* The harsh lives of Chinese immigrants in the 1800s and their efforts to achieve the American dream.

Students bring the book they read to the class discussion circle. The questions below can frame a discussion where students use examples from their books to better understand the challenges immigrants faced and continue to face negotiating two cultures.

• What struggles did characters face as they adapted to their new homes?

• Is America more of a melting pot or salad bowl or does another metaphor make more sense?

• Do immigrants and their children straddle two cultures? How difficult is this balancing act for a family and a community?

• What does it mean to be American? Do people have to change? Should they have to?
Celebration of Cultures

Many teachers plan an ethnic food festival as a culminating activity to their study of immigration. This memorable event can also be an opportunity to raise upper-level issues about how geography and climate shape culture, and similarities and differences among cultures. Students can analyze how American culture has influenced the traditional shopping and eating patterns of immigrants and how immigrant cultures have influenced American culinary practices.

To accompany their traditional ethnic dish, students write an information card that includes the name of the dish, its main ingredients, where the dish originated and why, and what family tradition it is associated. A small picture of the dish and its main ingredients can be placed on a classroom map, making the connection between geography, climate, and food production explicit.

The book, *Everybody Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley, is a good vehicle for discussing the culinary similarities and differences of cultures. As a young girl searches her neighborhood for her brother, she discovers that people from a variety of cultural backgrounds are making different rice dishes for dinner.

The most important aspect of teaching about immigration may be giving the unit the time it deserves. Preparing to interview immigrants (or children of immigrants) takes time – time to research immigrant stories, time to develop meaningful questions, time to practice interviewing, and time to analyze the completed interviews. Time invested in these activities is time well spent. The rich discussion, drawing of inferences, comparative analysis, and assessment of experiences are upper level activities that address both literacy and social studies standards. The wonderful variety of picture books that support these activities can only enhance student abilities to explore what it means to live in, as Walt Whitman put it, “not merely a nation, but a teeming nation of nations.”

Other Recommended Books

Bartone, Elisa. *Pepe the Lamplighter*. Despite his father’s disapproval, Pepe becomes a lamplighter to help support his immigrant family in turn-of-the-century New York City.

Bierman, Carol. *Journey to Ellis Island: How My Father Came to America*. A real-life account of a Russian Jewish family’s journey to a new land.

Currier, Katrina. *Kai’s Journey to Gold Mountain*. A twelve-year-old Chinese boy is detained on Angel Island while trying to come to America.

Dooley, Norah. *Everybody Cooks Rice*. A child is sent to find her brother at dinnertime and learns that all of her neighbors are making varied kinds of rice, according to their different cultural backgrounds.

Fraser, Mary Ann. *Ten-Mile Day: And the Building of the Transcontinental Railroad*. Captures the day that the transcontinental railroad was completed.

Freedman, Russell. *Immigrant Kids*. Captures the experience of being a young urban immigrant around the turn of the century; excellent photos.


Lee, Milly. *Landed*. Entering America from China is difficult for twelve-year-old Sun because of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

Levine, Ellen. *If Your Name Was Changed at Ellis Island*. A comprehensive discussion of the immigration procedures followed at Ellis Island between 1892 and 1914.


Tarbescu, Edith. *Annushka’s Voyage*. Two sisters travel from Russia with hopes of a better life.

Woodruff, Elvira. *The Memory Coat*. Cousins leave their Russian shtetl for America, hopeful that they will pass the dreaded Ellis Island inspection.
There are many “truisms” about the United States that most Americans never think about. While it is the richest country in human history, it has more poor people than any other developed country today. It is nation of immigrants, yet their descendants identify as “natives” or simply “Americans” in order to raise their status above more recent immigrants. It is the nation where ideologies of cultural pluralism and “100 percent Americanism” co-exist, sometimes in direct conflict. It is a nation where before World War I an Italian-American policemen told an American Indian woman making a street corner speech for the Industrial Workers of the World that she should go back where she came from.

In portraying immigrants and immigration throughout U.S. history, the Hollywood film industry has generally reflected the dominant ideology of the time, playing to the perceived prejudices of audiences with formulistic portrayals of immigrant groups. For example, Italian-Americans began being portrayed as cutthroat criminals or comedy relief characters (jolly fellows with big mustaches) in silent films. Early sound “gangster films,” especially Little Caesar (starring Edward J. Robinson) and Scarface (starring Paul Muni) portrayed pathological criminals with Italian surnames rising and falling in the jungle of criminal enterprise.

Even though many of the studio owners who developed Hollywood in the early 20th century were of Jewish-American background, early films played upon popular stereotypes, presenting Jews as comic figures with heavy Yiddish accents and occasionally as gangsters such as the character “Nails Nathan,” a supporting figure in Public Enemy starring Jimmy Cagney. Hollywood studios also resisted making overt anti-Nazi films until the beginning of the European war in 1939 and did not address on any level questions of racism and anti-Semitism until World War II and the post-war era.

Until the post-WWII era and the rise of the modern Civil Rights movement, films usually portrayed the U.S. as an Anglo-American country. Ethnic and religious groups who were “White” were judged by how they conformed to Anglo-American role models. Irish Catholic priests were portrayed positively as two-fisted father figures (portrayed by actors like Pat O’Brien, who also played football coach Knute Rockne in Knut Rockne, All American (1940) and Spencer Tracy, famous for his portrayal of Father Flanagan). These priests fought against the crime and corruption among youth in the immigrant slums in thirties movies. Going My Way (starring Bing Crosby as a young priest) featured Barry Fitzgerald as an older lovable priest speaking in a thick Irish brogue.

Non-European immigrant groups had a more limited role in movies produced in the first half of the twentieth century. Along with stereotypic comedy relief portrayals as restaurant workers and laundry workers, Chinese-Americans were seen in the 1930s and 1940s in a long series of B movies, the Charley Chan mystery films, in which a succession of European-American actors (Warner Oland, Sidney Toler, and Roland Winters) played the Honolulu-based detective who solved crimes while quoting Confucius and speaking in parables. Chan was always accompanied by an “Americanized” son who was played by Asian-American actors and a superstitious, ignorant, and cowardly African American servant. The Japanese-American detective, Mr. Moto (played in a series of films by the prominent actor and refugee from Hitler Germany Peter Lorre) was in his use of Judo a more “American” action oriented figure than Charlie Chan, until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor ended the series.

Exceptions
Although portrayals of immigrant generally were not positive and those of Asian and Latino immigrants were overtly negative and demeaning, there were important exceptions. Charlie Chaplin, the most important film personality in the world in the silent era dealt with immigration differently in The Immigrant (1917) in which the Chaplin’s “tramp” character, a sort of reverse Horatio Alger, makes his way to the U.S. through steerage and then struggles to survive. In the 1920s, Abe’s Irish Rose (1928) adapted from a popular stage play, used the story of an Irish-Jewish love affair and marriage to portray in comedy and melodrama the conflicted relationships of two immigrant groups. The Jazz Singer (1927) the first sound film, portrayed the
son of a Jewish Cantor’s rise in show business and all of the conflicts between a traditional past and an assimilated future.

During WWII, films portraying Irish, Italian, Polish, Jewish, and other soldiers from immigrant backgrounds in fighting battalions living, working, joking and fighting together with Anglo American farm boys and Southern whites on an egalitarian basis became Hollywood staples. Actors like William Bendix, (the Irish guy from Brooklyn), Richard Conte (usually Italian, sometimes Latino), and Sam Levine (always Jewish) developed these more nuanced portrayals, which reflected elements of the old stereotypes with a new sense of respect for the courage and decency of the characters.

**Cold War Themes**

Postwar films reflected the contradictions created by the Cold War and also the Civil Rights movement in the United States, which enabled various groups to begin to redefine their ethnic heritage in positive non-stereotypic ways in American films. The Cold War brought the real possibility that immigrants, even naturalized citizens, could be deported. In some Cold War films, this was portrayed positively, as a “cleansing” of spies and subversives. An alternative view was presented in *My Girl Tisa* (1948). In this film German-born actress Lilli Palmer starred as an immigrant worker on the Lower East Side struggling to find work and fearful of deportation. Eventually, she gains her citizenship with the help of an attorney. However New Deal influenced social dramas were rapidly becoming casualties of the Cold War and the Hollywood Blacklist. Adrienne Scott, author of *Crossfire* (1947), a powerful film about anti-Semitism, was blacklisted, and the film’s director, Edward Dmytryk, was imprisoned as a member of the Hollywood Ten. Arthur Miller, another target of the “blacklisters,” dealt with the question of deportation in *A View from the Bridge* (1962), a successful play turned into a powerful film. In this play and film a Brooklyn longshoreman turns in an illegal Italian immigrant because a young woman he desires loves the immigrant.

Gradually the postwar portrayals of immigrants in films improved. *I Remember Mama* (1948), a film based on a memoir and successful Broadway play, chronicled the experiences of a large Norwegian family in early 20th century. In *West Side Story* (1961), Hollywood combined *Romeo and Juliet* with *Abe’s Irish Rose* and *Blackboard Jungle* in an enormously successful musical drama. By the late 1950s, Puerto Ricans had become an important minority group in New York City and to a lesser extent other major U.S. cities. Love and ethnic conflict fill the film, which uses the love story between the sister of a Puerto Rican street gang member and a member of a rival Anglo gang. The film did not realistically deal with race questions, burying them in a melodramatic plea for tolerance. The U.S. as a serious promised land is the theme of Elia Kazan’s *America, America* (1963), in which Kazan chronicles his own ethnic experience, analyzing a poor Greek Christian who struggles to escape racist oppression and poverty for a new life in the United States.

**New Films for a New Age**

In the aftermath of the social struggles of the 1960s, a new generation of films dealt with the immigrant experience and also with newer generations of immigrants. While the *Godfather* films initially angered Italian-Americans because of their powerful revival of the gangster stereotype, the films also portrayed crime as a business that eventually, in the person of Michael Corleone, supersedes all other forms of social relationships and loyalties. *The Godfather Part II* (1974) contrasts the young Vito Corleone (Robert DeNiro), who becomes a successful organized crime leader in response to the grinding poverty and extortion of life in New York’s little Italy, with his son Michael, who defeats his various rivals and competitors and brings the “business” to the postwar frontier of Las Vegas. The rise of Vito Corleone is a testament to Gandhi’s observation that poverty is the greatest source of violence. The “triumphs” of Michael Corleone can perhaps best be understood as an example of the violence that, while direct in criminal big business, also stands behind both big business and its enforcers in government.

the historic effects of the nineteenth century Chinese exclusion acts that separated Chinese immigrants from their families. The film follows a Chinese-American World War II veteran who, faced with strong pressure from his father, reluctantly uses the GI Bill to marry and bring back a Chinese girl so she can meet a father she has never seen. In The Joy Luck Club (1993), Wang looks at four Chinese-American women who are the daughters of immigrants. One of the women learns about the family her mother left behind in China and eventually visits them.

Wang’s large body of films, which deal primarily with successful people, have introduced many Americans to aspects of Chinese culture and encouraged other filmmakers to deal with Chinese-American life. In The Wedding Banquet (1993), director Ang Le enters uncharted territory with a comedy about a wealthy, gay businessman in New York who is pressured by his Taiwanese family to marry. He comes up with the idea of a paper marriage to a Chinese girl in need of a green card, but things don’t quiet work out so well as his family steps forward with plans for a great wedding. Combination Platter (1993), a fascinating low-budget film by director Tony Chen, centers around a Chinese Restaurant in New York and deals with the life of older Chinese-Americans and recent immigrants. The hero, Robert, with help from some colorful friends, seeks to marry to get a green card, although this becomes quite difficult, both practically and culturally. The film is at its best in portraying tough Chinese-American street culture as part of multi-ethnic New York. The film also deals with the dangers that the INS poses to undocumented Chinese workers.

Undocumented Immigrants

The Reagan eighties saw a major peace movement in the U.S. struggling against the administration’s attempt to overthrow the Sandinista government in Nicaragua and its support for the rightwing regime and its death squads in El Salvador. At the same time Latinos, called “Hispanics” by the U.S. government and media, became targets of government efforts to stem undocumented immigrants pouring into regional labor markets. In response, Gregory Nava’s El Norte (1983) looks at two Guatemalan teenagers who survive an army massacre against their village and eventually come to the U.S. as uneducated, undocumented workers, “illegal” immigrants whose struggle for existence makes an interesting contrast with Robin Williams comical Russian welcomed into the U.S. in Moscow on the Hudson. For teachers of social studies, the social drama of El Norte may be the most influential of the new immigration films.

Echoes of El Norte from the Anglo side can be seen in Lone Star (1996), a film which uses an old murder to look at the violence and corruption that characterizes a Texas border town where Mexicans have long been second class citizens and “illegals” continually try to cross a river at night to reach U.S. territory. In a more direct connection, John Carlos Frey’s low budget The Gatekeeper (1996) deals with what is usually a hero figure in conservative U.S. films, the “rogue cop” who turns vigilante to fight the forces of evil that a system restrained by “liberal ideas” about civil liberties fails to control. A U.S. customs agent launches his own undercover war against the “illegals” that he despises as a threat to U.S. security and culture. Hoping to expose the smuggling, he goes to Mexico and poses as a would-be illegal, seeking to enter the U.S. with the help of a powerful drug ring. The agent finds himself in very difficult circumstance, forced into virtual slave labor with the others whom he initially despised. Ultimately, the film teaches the agent and its audience the lesson that human dignity transcends borders and ethnicity and that bigotry merely aids the machinations of its enemies.

A Day Without A Mexican (2004) brilliantly satirizes immigration restrictions, “English only” campaigns, and attacks on undocumented workers as one-third of the population of California (Latinos, most of whom are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants) disappear for a day, leaving the rest of the population to face the hardships that the removal of their labor produces. Fast Food Nation (2006), a fascinating docudrama based on a non-fiction work, looks at the not so uplifting effects of the U.S. fast food industry, which undermines the local agriculture and ecology of Central American countries in order to import cheap beef and other products and employs at horribly low wages a work force filled with undocumented workers.

Ken Loach, a British Marxist film director known for his pro-labor films, dealt powerfully with undocumented workers and the struggle to unionize them in Bread and Roses (2000). For Loach, the struggle of Latino cleaning women in Los Angeles, largely ignored by the traditional unions, is part of the larger tradition of U.S. labor struggles. The film
follows two sisters who live in fear and poverty while they clean the corporate offices of the rich and powerful. A radical union organizer brings them and others together in a struggle against both the cleaning contractors who exploit them and their corporate clients, who benefit from the very cheap and dehumanized labor. Using a real strike in Los Angeles by Justice for Janitors in the early 1990s as its point of departure, Loach’s *Bread and Roses* stands alongside *El Norte* as the most powerful dramatic film dealing with the exploitation and oppression of undocumented workers.

**“Two Tier” Immigration**

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the U.S. film industry also produced bigger budget comedies about elite “new Americans,” and more sympathetic melodramatic portrayals of older immigrant communities who retained aspects of their pre-U.S. national culture, and newer immigrants seeking and gaining material success in the U.S. These included *Coming to America* (1988) in which Eddie Murphy plays an African Prince escaping from and an arranged marriage. Although clearly influenced by *El Norte*, *Born In East LA* (1987) made the deportation of U.S. citizens to Mexico into a comedy. Rudy, a Mexican-American worker without ID and without any real knowledge of Spanish is caught with illegal immigrants in an INS raid on a sweatshop. He ends up in Mexico and he tries to find away back. Although the film is often hilarious, the situation really is not that funny. In *Green Card* (1990), a well-made romantic comedy, French actor Gerard Depardieu plays a Frenchman who needs a green card to get a decent job and Andie MacDowell is a professional woman who needs a husband to qualify for a desirable New York apartment. In the Hollywood tradition, they fall in love, but their story has little to do with the reality faced by the millions of undocumented workers who now labor in the U.S.

Although there are exceptions, the films dealing with Indian Americans are largely films about “successful” people struggling either dramatically or comically with assimilationist and cultural pluralist adaptations to the U.S. In *Mississippi Masala* (1992), Indian immigrants are at the center of what is perhaps the most sensitive film dealing with the new ethnic mix that is contemporary. The developing love story between the daughter of the immigrants (Sarita Choudhary) and a young African-American (Denzel Washington) explores issues of nationality and ethnicity. In *The Journey* (1997), a traditional Indian father visits his son and his American daughter-in-law in Pittsburgh. The film focuses on their efforts to make sense of their respective lives. *Hyberad Blues* (1998), a fascinating low budget comedy, deals with the problems that young Indians with technical and professional education have in adjusting to U.S. society and the problems that Indians and Indian-Americans who grew up in the U.S. have in adjusting when they visit India. *ABCD* (2001) deals with the alienation of widowed Indian women in the U.S. Neither “American” nor “Indian,” they confront the decisions made to come to the U.S.

**The New Films and Social Studies Teaching**

Today, there is an abundance of films that social studies teachers can use when dealing with immigration and the immigrant in U.S. history and society. Major themes that can be explored in social studies classes using film are the different experiences of immigrants in the past and present as well as the different experiences today of well educated immigrants, especially those from south and east Asia, and the predominantly Mexican and Central American “illegal immigrants” who have few skills useful in a technologically advanced society.

For students, the plight of undocumented Latino immigrants is a central issue in American life. According to Gregory Nava, the director of *El Norte*, contemporary America remains a society where the conditions described in the movie, after decades of repressive legislation and vigilante action, have grown worse for the poor people pushed out of their own countries and struggling to make an honest living by finding work and working hard in the United States. They remain excluded from the “American Dream” by those who regularly invoke it.
Reviews – New York and Slavery: Time to Teach the Truth

The publication of New York and Slavery, Time to Teach the Truth by Alan Singer (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2008), $16.95/paperback 978-0-7914-7510-2; $49.50 hard cover 978-0-7914-7509-6) was supported by the New York State Council for the Social Studies. William Loren Katz is the author of Black Indians and forty other books. His website is http://williamlkatz.com. A version of his essay was originally published online in The Black World Today. Marlene Munn-Joseph is a former high school social studies teacher at Campus Magnet High School, Queens, New York and is currently a teacher educator at Hofstra University. A version of this essay appeared in the journal Encounter. Mary Elizabeth Stewart is an elementary school teacher in the Berne-Knox-Westerlo CSD and co-founder of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capital Region. April Francis, a middle school teacher in Uniondale, NY, was on the team that developed the New York and Slavery curriculum.

“New York is the Chief Port in the World for the Slave Trade”

by William Loren Katz

As some southern legislatures, prodded by African American representatives, expressed regret over their states’ role in slave trading and exploiting slave labor, a kind of “truth and reconciliation” movement has stirred some educators. So far the focus has been on the southern states where African people were brutally exploited, their families sundered, resulting in a civil war and a nation wide system of racial inequality.

Now some educators who welcome this truth are claiming it omits the complicity of “the free North.” Prominent northern merchant, industrial and banking families built the ships, hired the captains and crews and financed the expeditions that snared millions of African men, women and children for forced labor in the Americas. Wealthy Northerners then used their profits to fund the southern plantation system and politically promote slaveholder goals. Northern capital, ships and business acumen carried cotton and other plantation crops to world markets, and produced the chains and whips needed by planters and overseers. “I hear the sound of the hammer, I see the smoke of furnaces where manacles and fetters are forged for human hands,” said Senator Daniel Webster. He was standing in Boston when he spoke.

In New York and Slavery: Time to Teach the Truth, Alan Singer of Hofstra University tells how he and his classes stood in today’s Wall Street and pointed to buildings where New York’s top entrepreneurs reaped the profits of human bondage.

Northern slavery began with the Dutch occupation when enslaved Africans were vital to the city’s economy. Africans put up the first buildings, brought in the first crops, turned an Indian path into Broadway, and built the wall at Wall Street. In the British colony of New York its bankers and merchants so successfully invested in the African trade they made it the slave-traders’ leading port. After the Revolution, with the city leading the way, slavery and its profits grew in the land of the free. A greater percentage of white households in Brooklyn, Queens and Staten Island owned slaves than in South Carolina. The world’s first stock exchange opened in New York in 1792 and half of its 177 stockholders owned slaves. Africans were auctioned to bidders at Wall Street and other city markets. Forced labor made the Empire State.

New York and Slavery summons a host of reliable witnesses. There is the calm, confident, talkative Captain James Smith, a chillingly unrepentant slave trader. Sitting in a city jail serving a two-year sentence and $1,000 fine for violating the federal law against slave trading, Smith tells a reporter he is proud of himself and the other “good men in the business.” Smith states: “New York is the chief port in the world for the Slave Trade. It is the greatest
place in the universe for it. Neither in Cuba nor in the Brazils is it carried on so extensively. Ships that convey Slaves to the West Indies and South America are fitted out from New York... New York is our headquarters.”

Smith’s simple truth, substantiated by Singer’s statistics and documentation, has yet to find its niche in our social studies curricula, in high school and college courses, and on Regents examinations. If we are ever to understand the roots of our economic and racial problems, schools have to confront these issues. But since Captain Smith’s interview New York students, instructors, teacher colleges, public school classrooms have ignored or denied this knowledge.

*New York and Slavery* indicts a host of prominent New York mercantile and banking families and corporations such as Citicorp first made its name in the slave trade. Slaveholder names currently grace our buildings, bridges, parks, streets, and schools. This, Singer shows, teaches our children to celebrate men who benefited from the African trade, southern slavery and bondage in New York.

In 1860 Abraham Lincoln failed to carry New York City by 30,000 votes, and there was a good reason. By then the city’s prominent businessmen, who also controlled leading politicians and major newspapers, had cemented an alliance with the southern planter aristocracy. The next year Mayor Fernando Wood, representing this business community, proposed New York rename itself “Tri-Insula,” and continue to trade with if not secede and join the Confederacy. His brother ran the *Daily News*, a racist, pro-Confederate mouthpiece. In 1863, after pro-Confederate governor Horatio Seymour told Manhattan crowds that revolution “can be proclaimed by a mob as well as by a government,” the white working-class exploded against Lincoln’s new draft law. Tens of thousands of immigrants and other working people rioted against Lincoln’s new draft law, terrorizing and killing citizens of color, anti-slavery whites, and even police who stood in their way. Seymour returned to three times address rioters as “my friends.” Subduing the worst urban riot of the century required 43 Divisions sent from the Gettysburg battlefield where they could have pursued General Lee’s defeated army.

Professor Singer also makes clear there was a side to this history worth celebrating. New York was the home of such titans of the anti-slavery crusade as Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman. Untold numbers of lesser known heroic New Yorkers, whites and African Americans, men and women, put their lives on the line to battle human bondage, help enslaved men and women escape, and fight racial discrimination. In their struggle against those whose wealth and influence made the city a leading slave trading port, they suffered many defeats and humiliations. White and black New Yorkers who assembled to protest slavery often faced racist mobs urged on by New York mercantile and banking elite, and their media.

Professor Singer, a former city secondary school teacher, a professor at Hofstra, a prodigious researcher, and an indefatigable trainer of educators, is an accomplished hand at creating valuable teaching tools. *New York and Slavery* grows out of decades of scholarly investigations, and includes examples of his many efforts to field test his materials in classrooms and in teacher training sessions and includes an eleven-page bibliography.

Fully documented, engaging and easy to read, *New York and Slavery* includes teacher suggestions for using memoirs, oral and local history — and even provides student-created rap lyrics on his material. It is highly encouraging that the State University of New York published *New York and Slavery*. This should help reach Singer’s goal that this story reaches public school teachers and pupils, particularly in New York. New York and Slavery is part vital information, part methodology for teachers and students, and part personal polemic. Singer airs opposing views and has a dialog with his material that can encourage teachers to offer controversial material in classes. Some readers may prefer the author less involved and or judgmental, but this is neither his style nor way of thinking. New York and Slavery is a singular gift to New York teachers and children, and a milestone in the battle for historical truth. How else, Singer’s book seems to ask, are we ever going to solve our racial nightmare, educate our children for a multicultural world, and provide future citizens with the knowledge they need? Can any New York teacher, college professor, or Board of Education member ever again say, “we did not know these facts” or “we did not know how to teach this”?

Professor Singer, and his helpers young and old, have done everyone’s homework and deserve our thanks. In a long, productive career in multicultural education this volume stands as Singer’s best work. Hopefully it will encourage educators in other states to teach the truth about slavery.
Complicity and Resistance is Central to the Book

by Marlene S. Munn-Joseph

As a professor of curriculum and teaching, I found Alan Singer’s book, New York and Slavery, Time to Teach the Truth, to be an indispensable resource for practicing teachers. The book presents an approach to teaching that can be described within the tradition of social reconstructionism in curriculum studies.

Singer emphasizes the process of curriculum decision-making for teachers, and highlights the literature on student understanding, and how it is critically shaped by racial and ethnic identity. Like earlier historians such as Horace Mann Bond, Singer’s work moves the curriculum beyond a set of facts to be delivered to students, to knowledge that needs to be critiqued and discussed. With this approach, teachers must consider students’ connection to the knowledge brought into the classroom. That is why from the beginning Singer addresses his own position as a white man and why he pursues this work.

Drawing from James Banks’ typology of knowledge, this book is an excellent example of transformative academic knowledge, an approach to knowledge construction that recognizes that no knowledge is neutral, but influenced by social relations in society. This is illustrated when Singer introduces the reader to the complexity of the history of slavery by raising the question of New York State’s role. His work challenges the conventional wisdom that only the South was involved in the slave system. As an historian, Singer resurrects what he describes as the wastebasket of history: knowledge that has been ignored but is very relevant. Singer’s intent is to prepare the social studies teacher to be an agent of social change because, as he asserts, “the study of history is a powerful force for human understanding and social change.” He explains that the idea for the book arose out of his work with the award-winning New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Curriculum Guide.

The book is organized into thirteen chapters. Seven of the chapters outline in careful detail the history of slavery in New York. Singer criticizes the traditional social studies curriculum for obscuring important historical data and failing to tell the truth. The remaining five chapters provide teachers with a rationale for this work, instructional ideas and resources, and an invaluable section on what students understand about slavery. Throughout, he offers a dialectical understanding of history, and looks at both New York’s complicity with and resistance to the institution of slavery.

What is particularly impressive about this work is how, through the historical data, Singer links the importance of individual and collective choice to the professional practice of teachers. He encourages teachers to engage in pedagogy that fosters complexity.

In the chapter, “Erased from Memory,” Singer describes his work with a New York City teacher’s social studies class to create a walking tour of the historical sites in lower Manhattan that marked New York’s participation in slavery. The problem, he explains, is that New York had no museums or permanent exhibits on slavery in New York City or the city’s role in the trans-Atlantic trade except for a recent temporary exhibit and a monument of the African American burial ground site.” The walking tour takes participants through lower Manhattan and locates fifteen historical sites related to the history of slavery.

In the chapter, “Teaching about Slavery,” Singer describes his commitment to helping teachers and students struggle through teaching and learning about the institution of slavery. He suggests that what was significant about this work was the dialogue it fostered. Singer encourages the use of texts by African Americans, and he offers perspectives from African American teachers on how they approached the teaching of slavery.

One of the better approaches to teaching about slavery is through drama, and Singer describes his work with students groups performing scenes from
Martin B. Duberman’s (1964) documentary play, *In White America*. Additionally, he has had students in both middle and high schools perform a version of the book *A People Could Fly* by Virginia Hamilton. Singer explains that a group of students he worked with protested a scene that was particularly violent, and together they made decisions to not cast the roles in the play according to the race of the characters.

The theme of complicity and resistance is central to the book. Singer raises a crucial question for teachers and students when he asks them to “examine why some people took a stand against injustice while other people, under similar circumstances, tolerated it or were actively complicit.” He outlines the persistent contradiction that plagues American history, the promise of freedom and the brutalizing institution of slavery and its aftermath. He observes that when students are studying this contradiction, it is critical that Africans not be reduced to objects but viewed with the humanity they deserve. Readers are provided with rich documentation of how repressive laws were used to control Africans in New York and how Africans in that historical period resisted their control.

Singer outlines how major historical figures were complicit in the preservation of the institution of slavery. He describes how he facilitated a discussion with a group of high school students about the name of their school. Singer asked these students if they knew that the person for whom the school was named was possibly a slave trader and whether the school’s name should be changed. This example illustrated to students that history is not relegated to the dustbin, but in fact, their perspectives mattered, insomuch as they are part of history making.

Overall, this work can help teachers create classrooms where students can engage in the development of their critical consciousness. Through a host of practical examples, it illustrates pedagogy that enables teachers and students to learn about “erased” ideas and challenge mainstream depictions of the institution of slavery.

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**The Struggle Against Slavery was a Struggle For Racial Equality**

by Mary Elizabeth Stewart

Only 166 pages! A tremendous amount of thought-provoking information, well documented throughout, is packed into these few pages. It is a small volume, but one well worth reading by every educator and every citizen in New York State.

Alan Singer’s premise, that there is more to slavery in New York than meets the eye, or the ear, or the textbook, or the classroom, is powerfully driven home through a concise, well organized, fast paced, well documented format. As a secondary school teacher in his own right, as well as a historian and college professor, Singer understands the driving need to engage students in relevant learning if they are to be captivated by what is taught. He also understands the need for students to express their voice in their studies. Integration throughout the text of the voices of students and teachers make *New York and Slavery* a powerful volume. Examples of instructional application of the content offer the reader practical, adaptable ideas for any classroom.

Singer’s focus on the institution of slavery in New York City at times becomes lost in the dramatic power of the text. However, the attention to details related to New York City allow the reader the opportunity to reflect on components of this “peculiar institution” that may very well have some similarities within his or her own community. The discussion, the exposé, of slavery and racism are brought home. No longer can northern educators espouse the fictitious claim that slavery and all of its baggage was the south’s problem.

The emphasis on complicity, resistance, and racism inform Singer’s interpretation of this history, as well they should. He reminds the reader, with extensive documentation to support his position, that the institution of slavery was not an accident, but that it was socially, legally, and economically supported. He identifies many well-regarded historic white New Yorkers who vigorously participated in this institution. He draws on the powerful voices of many African Americans who, with their brethren in bondage, resisted the oppression of enslavement and fought for the liberty that was guaranteed in the Declaration of Independence. He writes articulately about the racism that allowed this institution to flourish and plagues us throughout history into contemporary times. We continue to talk and teach about the abolition of slavery as just the ending of brutality against a people rather than talking and teaching about abolition as the embracing of equality. As Singer so aptly writes, “The
struggle against slavery was also a struggle for racial equality” (73).

According to Singer, the excising of the voices of “People of Color” from this history has been for political purposes, rather than for educational or historical purposes. I agree that the removal of African Americans from this history, except as oppressed victims, is part of the legacy of racism that framed the institutionalization of enslavement, and has whitewashed what is taught, making history “safe” for its recipients. However, I maintain that we must consider the repeated failure of major historians to bring this history forward to the public. They had a responsibility to challenge the “acceptable” canon that continues to be offered in our textbooks and classrooms.

The narratives of Solomon Northup, Harriet Jacobs, and Moses Roper, the research of historians such as Elizabeth Donnan, H.T. Catterall, and Dr. Frederic Bancroft, the interpretations of this history offered by A.A. Taylor, Francis Simkins, and Robert H. Woody, have not been widely publicized. The research and writings of such authors as DuBois, Aptheker, Foner, and Ripley have been collecting dust on the shelves in our libraries! To quote Carter G. Woodson, “But can you expect teachers to revolutionize the social order for the good of the community? Indeed we must expect this very thing.”

Revolutionize and teaching – strange bedfellows these days what with tests and school report cards and student progress reports. As educators we need to do what Alan Singer has done. We need to educate ourselves through continued research and conversation and we need to demand of the academics that they bring their research to us for presentation and conversation so that we can construct educational experiences for and with our students. These should be experiences that challenge us to grow in our understanding about being citizens in a global society. We must continue the legacy to which Alan Singer has so significantly contributed through the publication of New York and Slavery and about which he publicly presents, and we must provide our students with educational experiences so that they can carry on the legacy after us.

Teaching the Truth
by April Francis

As a middle school and high school student, and as a history major in college, I always felt there were gaps in what we were being taught. As an African American woman, I especially felt the neglect of my own history. Even when Africans and African Americans were mentioned, they were presented on the margin of events and as objects of oppression, rather than as important historical actors. New York and Slavery: Time to Teach the Truth is an important step in rectifying the historical record. I am proud to have participated in the development of the award winning New York and Slavery: Complicity and Resistance Curriculum that was the stimulus for this book. Much of my own work is centered on Black abolitionists from New York State whose actions helped propel the nation toward emancipation and Civil War.

I found the extensive history of Africans in New York and the city’s roles in the trans-Atlantic slave trade were eye opening. Reviewing primary sources was at times tedious, but the historical nuggets we uncovered, translated into classroom curriculum, and brought into our classrooms, made all the work worthwhile. This book makes the efforts of dozens of teachers who worked on the project accessible to everyone.

As a middle school teacher, I utilize material from the book and curriculum on a regular basis. My seventh grade students helped write and perform a “rap” opera based on the 1741 slave insurrection trial that lead to the death of dozens of enslaved Africans for the crime of wanting to be free. I also brought students to the New York and Slavery walking tour where they visited the African Burial Ground and learned about the history of slavery in New York, especially the complicity of major banks and insurance companies with the illegal trans-Atlantic slave trade. Many of these corporations still exist today, a point Alan Singer highlights.

This book provides readers with important information about New York State history that they probably have not been privy to in the past. It is an invaluable resource for teachers and high school and college students and it is written in such a way as to be accessible to the general reader. In my opinion, the most important achievement of the book is that it gives Africans in America the opportunity to tell their stories, and in doing it, Alan Singer teaches the truth!
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