

Meghan Sorenson

Professor Henry

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Understanding Immigration

The debate about immigration has gone on for decades. America was created with immigrants. “The Ellis Island Station was, first and foremost, a tribute to the industry, perseverance and hope of many immigrants who left their home countries, and often their families, in order to build a new and better life for themselves in [America]” (Timofeyev 1). Immigrants come from many different countries and for many different reasons. But the reality of accepting immigrants over the years has been challenging at times.

Today, even the most influential political figures have misconceptions of immigration in the United States. The 2008 republican presidential candidate, John McCain, stated in the Campaign for Liberty that immigrants “take jobs from American citizens, bankrupt our state and local governments with welfare costs, overload our schools at the expense of local taxpayers, bankrupt our hospitals because they don’t pay their medical bills, and overload our criminal justice system with criminals”. Contrary to what Americans may think, immigrants usually have a positive impact on our economy and our society. The majority of immigrants in the United States are “looking for a gateway to a new life and the dream of living as Americans” (Aguilar 1). Immigrants continue to contribute to the net gain of American society as a whole. Many industries count on contributions made by immigrants, many of whom are undocumented. But for many, immigration is believed to be an economic threat to America. Immigration actually contributes to our economy by stimulating the education system, labor market, and health care.

Illegal and legal immigrants enroll in United States colleges each year. There is a competition around the world to find professional talent in students to be high-tech workers, doctors and nurses, and university students and researchers. Jeanne Batalova, with the

Immigration Policy Center said, “Australia, Canada, South Korea, and many European countries have been actively recruiting [professional] foreign talent”. The United States has faced the problem of how to deal with immigrants, especially in the past decade. If the U.S. government will be proactive to find this foreign talent in students then our economy will benefit from these people.

Recognizing that today’s foreign students are potential contributors to the American knowledge-based economy, as well as ambassadors of public diplomacy abroad, it is in the national interest of the United States to maintain its historical openness to foreign students. By developing a concerted strategy to attract and retain skilled and educated students and workers from around the world, the United States can turn its existing strengths in to long-term competitive advantages, building upon its international reputation for superb education and cutting-edge research (Batalova 1).

The threat of immigrants “contaminating” the education system is a rumor among American people. The education system can use immigrants and foreign students to influence society in a positive way.

Another threat that Americans claim to face is that of the labor market. Some Americans say that immigrants take jobs. “They think every working immigrant occupies a job some citizen would fill. That is not true” (Jaynes 6). Immigrants contribute to our labor market by taking the jobs that Americans will not take. Some of the hardest workers are in landscaping and the majority of those who landscape are immigrants. Much of the service provided in the everyday fast food restaurant is done by immigrants because Americans do not want those jobs. Many other blue-collar jobs are filled by immigrants. Formal education has given wrong impressions to students to believe that immigrants take away jobs from citizens. In the Journal of American Ethnic History it states:

Americans who are engaged in low-wage of blue-collar work [feel threatened the most]. However, this is not where most immigrants are located in the labor market. According to

Wucker, twenty percent of immigrants are low-wage workers, while 75 percent of immigrants are professionals. Immigrants also make up twenty-five percent of the PhDs in the United States (Chavez 102).

This also goes along with immigrants and education. If we have immigrants in the United States then we need them to help the economy by being professionals or work in low-wage jobs that Americans will not take. If more people work in the United States, then it will stimulate our economy. Our economy depends on its immigrants.

Immigrants play a significant role in the current health care system. Many Americans believe that illegal immigrants take advantage of the emergency medical system. Millions of dollars are spent each year to care for emergency victims. Americans think that since immigrants may not have insurance then they will just use our tax dollars to go to the emergency rooms to be treated. Hospitals cannot turn down people who do not have insurance. But immigrants are stereotyped in the category that they cannot pay for the services they use. Immigrants want an equal opportunity to have affordable health insurance, just like every other American. Everyone wants to be able to stay healthy and care for their families. One source suggests that "Allowing millions of immigrants to purchase affordable healthcare will result in the payment of billions of dollars in insurance premiums, helping to pay the cost of the health reform in America" ("Sharing the Costs, Sharing the Benefits"). Most immigrants arrive in the United States at a young age so they are in their prime years. They are strong, able, and healthy people. Immigrants are much less likely than U.S.-born adults to report to hospitals in poor conditions. New immigrants are less likely to visit the emergency room. Immigrants want to pay their fair share for health care, just like Americans.

Immigration will always be a debate in the government and may never be resolved. Immigration's economic benefits are larger than its costs. Everyone deserves equal opportunity. And with a nation that was and is built on immigration, we need to address the debate over immigration and come up with a solution, or we would become hypocrites. We have all been

immigrants at one point, and Americans should treat those who want a taste of the American Dream with respect.

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