

Name

Course

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Date

Immigration in the 1990s

Introduction

Immigration to the United States has been a complex demographic situation that has contributed to changes in many aspects of life. Immigration has led to increase in population and cultural change throughout the history of America. It has also caused major political, economic, and social changes (Virginia 29).

Immigration history of the United States can be viewed in four eras. These include the colonial period, the 19th Century, the beginning of the 20th Century, and post-World War II (Virginia 78). Distinct nationalities and races immigrating to the United States characterize each period. During each period, there were reasons for immigrants from particular regions. These reasons include, unrest in particular countries or regions, and US laws that determined acceptance of refugees from particular region especially Africa (Robert 120).

Before independence, Majority of Immigrants to The United States came from Europe. Immigrants from Europe were as result of population pressure in their countries and lack of resources. British colonized United States to gain economically. Britain also wanted to expand her territories and settle some of her citizens in the United States. During this period, Britain captured slaves from Africa to work on farms in America (Virginia 104). Most of the African-American population migrated this period to the United States as slaves (Robert 114).

Since the beginning of the 21st Century, the large numbers of immigrants to the United States come from different regions in the world. This has brought legal changes that have affected the economic, political, and social aspects of citizens. As a result, there have been controversies regarding economic benefits, racism, jobs, settlement patterns, voting behavior and crime (Barone 17).

Throughout the history of, immigrants coming to the United States of America can be can be classified as legal and illegal immigrants. The 1990s pattern of immigration is characterized by sharp increase in the number of immigrants coming to the United States. Data from the Census Bureau and other government agencies indicate rapid increase of immigrants during the mid- 1990s and its peak at the end of the decade (Gjerde 25).

The trend in the 1990s is contrary to the perception that there has been continuous increase in the number of immigrants coming to the United States. From the beginning of 1990s to the middle of the decade, data from the government agencies estimate the number of immigrants at 1.1 million each year on average. During the peak years of 1999 and 2000, the number of immigrants, rose by 35%, standing at 1.5 million. This pattern of increase, and decline, is common in both legal and illegal immigrants from every nation and regions of the world (Thernstrom 56).

Types and Origins of Immigrants in the 1990s

Before 1990, the National Origins Immigration policy of 1924 had strict regulations for immigrants apart from those originating from Canada and western European countries (Thernstrom, 79). In 1990, the congress repealed the policy and allowed national-origin mix of immigrants. In 1994, majority of immigrants originated from low income countries of Latin America. In the same year, 40% of immigrants were from Mexico (Barkan 120).

However, the number of immigrants from Mexico has been fluctuating. This is portrayed by the decrease in the year 1997 and picking again in 1999. This is related to the porous US-Mexican border that attracts illegal immigrants. Beside the United States government always put new measure to address the situation (Barkan 142).

The immigration Act of 1990 led to the growth in number of immigrants and their relatives considered under the employment-preference category. This led the number to rise 140,000 from 55,000 under previous legislations. This legislation led to increase in number of applicants especially from poor countries with the aim of getting employment in the United States. In 1999, 20% of immigrants coming to the United States were considered based on their qualifications and skills (Bayor 110).

The 1990s, characterize the end of the cold war. This was the period the United States made major policy changes to accommodate the immigrants from different regions without considering the economic status of the immigrant's country. United States meant to portray herself as friendly nation, though a superpower. She also wanted to improve her trade relationships with many countries (Levinson 151).

Repeal of immigration policies by the United States also resulted from her growing industries that needed labor. United States was controlling the world economy and she was looking for investment destinations and market for her goods. Therefore, she had to repeal her immigration policies to appear friendly to other regions in the world especially Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Levinson 129).

The policy changes also allowed foreigners to apply to study in the United States. Data from Immigration agencies estimate 17% of legal immigrants to have education- related

reasons for coming to the United States. Majority of immigrant scholars came from African countries. This was as result of increased engagement between the United States and African governments to offer scholarships to the bright students of Africa (Levinson 110).

Asia had a big consumer population for industrial goods. United States also wanted to attract the Asian population to her industrial goods and establish good relations. America also wanted to attract investments from the growing rich Asian community. These policy changes also attracted job seekers from Asia especially from China and India. As a result, the number of legal immigrants from Asia increased to 12% in 1994 from 7% the previous years (Barkan 45).

However, the policy changes also attracted illegal immigrants. In the history of United States before the immigration policy changes, the number of illegal immigrants was small compared to the period between 1992 and 2000. In 1998, the number of illegal immigrants hit its peak at 21% of the total number of immigrants (Dassanowsky 111). Migrants from Latin America comprised the larger number of the illegal immigrants. This is related to closeness to the United States and the porous Mexican border. In 1999, immigrants from Mexico contributed to almost half of the total illegal immigrants (Meier 44).

Socio-economic and Political Impact of Immigrants in the 90s

The Immigration Act of 1990 improved the possibility of immigrants from diverse regions of the world. The law revised the ground of deportation and inadmissibility, and established Temporary protected Status. The law also ensured that those who wished to get temporary visas could access the services with ease. This allowed permission for stay to nationals whose countries were deemed unsafe for return due to armed conflicts or natural disaster. This saw an increased number of immigrants in the mid-90s (Bayer 114).

By 1996, immigrants comprised a significant population of the United States. The National Institute of Immigration Studies estimated the population of immigrants to comprise 10% of the US population (Meier 55). Majority of the immigrants originated from Latin American Countries especially Mexican who comprised 40% of the total number of immigrants (Barone 99).

Immigrants brought significant social and economic changes in the United States in the mid and late 90s. Immigrants of color faced racism and discrimination in the United States. They moved from states that had large number of white settlers to new settler states such as New York, California, Arizona, and New Mexico (Thernstrom 114).

Other immigrants who faced racism opted to flow away from states that had large population of natives such as Alaska. They opted to settle in states that had huge number of foreign-born population such as New York and California (Dassanowsky 120). Others opted for the new settlement states of Iowa and Northern Carolina. This led to new registrations concerning ownership of land and homes to protect the immigrants (Thernstrom 10).

There was also increased level of crime in the United States during this era. The unskilled illegal immigrants who were frustrated by life engaged in in illicit activities. They include drug peddling and robbery among others. In this era, the border with Mexico became more porous. Drug traffickers took advantage of the corrupt police and the porous border to sneak drugs to the United States (Barone 89).

Besides, many individual were involved in facilitating the business of assisting illegal immigrants through the crossing point of Tijuana. This business involved corrupt immigrations and police officers who collaborated with the drug lords. In the 90s many

murders case were reported in the states that border Mexico than any other period in the American history (Robert 58).

The increased number of the illegal immigrants led to a new political debate on new legislations to close the immigration loopholes. The states government that border with Mexico such Texas, Arizona, California, and New Mexico also focused on tightening border patrols. The issue of illegal immigrants from Mexico put more pressure on US government to act (Robert 109).

There was also suspicion that the border with Mexico could be the route for drug and human trafficking. Other illicit activities along the border with Mexico such as murder and robbery attracted public attention. Between the 1997 and 1998, there were more than 200 case of murder along the border with the state of Texas (Dassanowsky 15).

This was mainly a result of corrupt police and immigrant officers along the border. During this period, the officers use to take bribe from drug traffickers. This came into light in 1997 with the arrest of several counternarcotic officials who take bribes from Amado Carrillo, a powerful drug trafficker to the United States (Thernstrom 40).

The crossing point of Tijuana was also risky point for both the immigrants and the police. Drug lord would persecute those that tried to compromise their efforts to traffic drugs to the United States (Meier 66). In 1997 in particular, there was many violent incidents at the busy crossing point of Tijuana. Police Chiefs both from Mexico and from the United States who appeared to be aggressive in fighting drug traffickers were murdered (Robert 47).

Besides, the drug lords thrived in the business of helping illegal immigrants cross through Tijuana to the United States. They achieved this by collaborating with senior United

States immigrant officials and police officers. In 1997, this illegal business was estimated to be worth millions of US dollars (Virginia 44).

This led to executions of people believed to be leaking information to authorities. During this period, just about every day, Tijuana newspapers had photos of murder victims. The most shocking one was that of a taxi driver murdered together with a daughter of a senior US police officer. It is believed that the two had tried to leak information to the authorities in the United States (Bayor 19).

These murder incidents brought fear to the residents in Tijuana. The murder cases were many and complicated. Most Tijuana murder cases went unsolved. Police officers and prosecutors were fearing for their lives and did not want to be involved. Most of the victims' bodies were burnt and could not be identified easily. This made the case complicated for the police and the prosecutors. Other bodies could not be found for months or even years. Jensen, a 55-year-old American paramedic in Northern California, figures he had assisted families recover the bodies of more than 100 murder victims in 1997 (Thernstrom 87).

In the mid and late 90s, the United States faced the threat of terror attacks from the terror groups in the Middle East. Despite this threat, there were many immigrants from this region to the United States. The group of immigrants from the Middle East comprised both legal and illegal (Dassanowsky 69).

In 1999, Justice Officials gave orders for the illegal immigrants to leave the country immediately. The illegal immigrants ignored the orders to leave. Responding to this, the Justice Department started to target deportation of immigrants of the Middle Eastern descent. Despite these efforts, the United States authorities did not achieve deporting a large number of

illegal immigrants from the Middle East. The 2000 Census indicate an estimate of 115, 000 illegal immigrants of from the Middle Eastern countries (Bayer 131).

Although the American authorities did no brand all the immigrants from Middle East as terrorist, they appreciated the threat of terrorist from the region sneaking into the United States. The Centre for Immigration Studies observed that the many illegal settlers from all over the world is a reflection of how easy for the terrorists to sneak into the country.

However, immigrants contributed to the United States economic growth in a significant way. Researchers suggest that the immigrants raised the standards of living of American workers by increasing the rate if wage pay. This is because the immigrants do not pose any job competition to the US-born workers. Instead, immigrants complement the work of the American employees thus raising their productivity particularly in the service sector, agriculture, and construction (Meier 21).

Immigrants improved the well-being of American by lowering the prices of goods and services. Research conducted by Pew Hispanic Center in 1997 suggested that immigrants enhance the purchasing power of US citizen for services such as cleaning, gardening, and childcare. They make the services widely available and affordable to the American citizens (Virginia 81).

Conclusion

In the 90s, the United States government needed to address the issue of illegal immigrants to reap full benefits of immigrants. By taking bold steps especially in punishing the corrupt US officials, there could have been reduced case of drug trafficking and murder along the border with Mexico.

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