

Borders, Bans, Walls, and Welcomes: U.S. Immigration Today

Tuesday, September 5, 2017, at 7 p.m.

Friends of the USC Libraries Lecture Hall , Doheny Memorial Library 240

This evening's discussion is part of the Provost's Series on Wicked Problems for a reason. Immigration is a complex, contentious issue that affects millions of people around the world. In fact, the issue is so complex and contentious that even the basic data and vocabulary about immigration are hotly contested and strategically employed to bolster competing arguments and agendas. This guide aims to offer some helpful context and concepts to spark your understanding and critical reflection, while acknowledging that there is no truly "objective" information about such a complicated and controversial issue.

BY THE NUMBERS

- There are currently more than 65.6 million forcibly displaced people in the world, including 22.5 million refugees and more than 10 million stateless people.
- The conflict in Syria has displaced 6 in 10 Syrians, or 12.5 million people, from their homes.
- Since 1975, more than 3 million refugees have been resettled in the United States.
- Over the past decade, the largest number of refugees in the United States have come from Burma and Iraq.
- In 2016, nearly half of refugees in the United States were from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Syria, and Burma (Myanmar).
- In 2016, Muslims made up about 46 percent of refugee admissions into the United States. Christians made up about 44 percent.
- As of 2015, there were 43.3 million immigrants living in the United States, about 13.5 percent of the U.S. population. Immigrants from Mexico accounted for about 11.6 million, or 27 percent, of this 13.5 percent.

KEY WORDS

Assimilation: A sociocultural fusion wherein individuals and groups of differing ethnic heritage acquire the basic habits, attitudes, and mode of life of one national culture.

Asylum: An ancient juridical concept under which a person fleeing persecution in one country can be protected by another

sovereign nation. Article 14 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." A person may seek asylum when they fear persecution on protected grounds such as race, caste, nationality, religion, political opinions, or, increasingly in recent decades, gender or sexual orientation.

Emigrant: A migrant who leaves a country to establish permanent residence elsewhere.

Immigrant: A migrant who comes to a new country for the purpose of permanent residence.

Isolationism: A national political policy or doctrine that asserts that a nation's best interests are preserved by keeping out of the affairs of other nations.

Migrant: A person who chooses to leave their homeland not because of a direct threat of death or persecution, but to improve their life, whether for work, education, family reunion, or other reasons. If they choose to return home, they will continue to receive the protection of their government.

Open border: An open border allows free movement of people between different jurisdictions with no or limited restrictions. A *de jure* open border is open because of intentional legislation or lack of legal controls, as in the case of national borders within the EU. A *de facto* open border is open because of lack of adequate enforcement at the border.

Refugee: A person fleeing armed conflict or persecution. Refugees are defined, recognized, and protected by international law because it is too dangerous for them to return home, and they need sanctuary elsewhere.

Sanctuary city: In the United States and Canada, a sanctuary city is a municipality where local authorities limit their cooperation with national government in the enforcement of immigration law. This is done to encourage people to report crimes, use health and social services, and enroll their children in school without fearing deportation and possible family break-up. There are an estimated 60 sanctuary cities in the United States, with varying policies, such as prohibiting city police or social-service agencies from questioning people about their immigration status, or refusing requests by federal immigration authorities to detain people beyond their release date if they were jailed for breaking local law. In the United Kingdom, the term *sanctuary city* applies to places that are proactively committed to welcoming refugees, asylum seekers, and others seeking safety.

Stateless: Having no citizenship in any state. Some people are born stateless, and others become stateless. Statelessness can occur for several reasons, including discrimination against particular ethnic or religious groups, or on the basis of gender; the emergence of new states and transfers of territory between existing states; and gaps in nationality laws.

Xenophobia: Fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners, or of anything that is strange or foreign.

U.S. IMMIGRATION OVER TIME

Throughout U.S. history, the number of immigrants and refugees coming into the United States has fluctuated along with global events and national priorities. Immigration policy has likewise shifted with political and historical winds. Each wave of immigration was met by a wave of anti-immigrant sentiment; for instance, Irish Catholics experienced religious discrimination by U.S.-born Protestants, and a wave of Chinese immigration in the mid-19th century provoked a backlash that led to the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. From the 1920s through 1965, U.S. immigration policy was guided by a quota system that privileged European immigrants. The passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act in 1965 allowed increasing waves of immigration from Asia, Africa, and Latin America. In 1975, the passage of the Indochina Migration and Refugee Assistance Act allowed an increase in refugees from Southeast Asia. In 1999, the U.S. accepted refugees from war-torn Kosovo. And so on. These are just a very few examples of the changing patterns and policies of U.S. immigration.

Data on the nativity of the U.S. population began to be collected around 1850. Researchers concluded that immigrants made up about 10 percent of the population at the time. But their research used the terms “foreign-born” and “immigrant” interchangeably to refer to, and count, people who were not U.S. citizens at birth. So where did slaves fit into this count?

Citing concerns that refugees may pose a threat to national security, the United States turned away Jews fleeing the Nazis. The most notorious incident happened in 1939, when almost 1,000 Jews who fled Europe on the German ocean liner *St. Louis* were turned back from the U.S. coast off Florida. They were forced to return to Europe, and more than a quarter of them died in the Holocaust.

Since 1975, more than 1.2 million refugees from Southeast Asia have resettled in the United States, making them the largest refugee group in modern U.S. history. They fled a humanitarian crisis caused by the Vietnam War, economic sanctions, and the establishment of communist governments in the former French colonies Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia.

In 2016, Ben Emmerson the UN Special Rapporteur on counter-terrorism and human rights, released a report stating there is “no evidence that migration leads to increased terrorist activity,” but there is evidence that “migration policies that are restrictive or that violate human rights may in fact create conditions conducive to terrorism.”

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- The Puritans were English Protestants who fled to the American colonies in search of freedom from religious prosecution. Were they refugees? Can a group be both refugees and settler-colonialists?
- How do queer relationships fit into—or get pushed out of—immigration policies centered around keeping families together?
- Should the same rules or freedoms govern the movement of people across borders as the movement of money and goods across borders? If so, why? If not, what should guide policies for each type of border crossing?

TO LEARN MORE, EXPLORE THESE RESOURCES

- #ImmigrationSyllabus: <http://editions.lib.umn.edu/immigrationsyllabus/>
- The Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles: www.chirla.org
- The UN Refugee Agency: <http://www.unhcr.org>

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

ROBERT LABAREE of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about immigration policy and the challenges of national borders.

Recommended Books

- Tirman, John. *Dream Chasers: Immigration and the American Backlash*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press 2015. Von KleinSmid Center Library JV6483 .T56 2015
- Dreby, Joanna. *Everyday Illegal: When Policies Undermine Immigrant Families*. Oakland, CA: University of California Press 2015. Von KleinSmid Center Library JV6483 .D74 2015
- Pallares, Amalia. *Family Activism: Immigrant Struggles and the Politics of Noncitizenship*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2015. Von KleinSmid Center Library JV6456 .P35 2014
- Garip, Filiz. *On the Move: Changing Mechanisms of Mexico-U.S. Migration*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2017. Von KleinSmid Center Library JV7401 .G39 2017
- Aptekar, Sofya. *The Road to Citizenship: What Naturalization Means for Immigrants and the United States*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press 2015. Von KleinSmid Center Library JK1759 .A58 2015

Recommended Databases

The following databases provide access to scholarly research literature related to immigration policy and reform as well as literature that helps you see borders, bans, walls, and welcomes through the eyes of those most affected by various reform efforts. Access them through the USC Libraries website at libraries.usc.edu.



America: History and Life

Reference tool for U.S. and Canadian history and culture with full-text coverage of hundreds of journals and books, and selective indexing for journals from 1863 to the present.

Chicano Database

Bibliographic index focuses on the Mexican-American and Chicano experience, and the broader Latino experience of Puerto Ricans, Cuban Americans, and Central American immigrants since 1992. Covers Chicano/a art, education, folklore, health, history, labor, language and literature, music, politics, public policy, religion, sociology, and women's studies.

Ethnic NewsWatch

A full-text database containing newspapers, magazines, journals, and newsletters of the ethnic, minority, and native press. Designed to provide the other side of the story, *Ethnic NewsWatch* content provides additional viewpoints from those proffered by the mainstream media.

PolicyFile

Offers full-text access to U.S. foreign and domestic policy papers and gray literature published by a wide variety of think tanks, research institutes, and agencies. *PolicyFile* is updated weekly with abstracts and links to the latest reports, papers, and documents.

Worldwide Political Science Abstracts

Provides citations, abstracts, and indexing of the international journal literature in political science and its complementary fields, including international relations, law, and public administration and policy.

Selected Think Tanks

The following organizations and research centers support research on immigration reform and the immigrant experience.

The American Immigration Council

<https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/>

A nonprofit organization devoted to promoting laws, policies, and attitudes that honor the United States as a nation of immigrants. Through research and policy analysis, litigation and communications, and international exchange, the Council seeks to shape a twenty-first century vision of the American immigrant experience.

Immigration History Research Center

<https://cla.umn.edu/ihr>

Founded in 1965, the Immigration History Research Center aims to transform the way in which we understand immigration in the past and present. Along with its partner, the IHRC Archives, it is the oldest and largest interdisciplinary research center and archives devoted to preserving and understanding immigrant and refugee life in North America.

Mexican Migration Project

<http://mmp.opr.princeton.edu/home-en.aspx>

The Project was created in 1982 by an interdisciplinary team of researchers to further our understanding of the complex process of Mexican migration to the United States. Since its inception, the MMP's main focus has been to gather social as well as economic information on Mexican-US migration. The data collected has been compiled in a comprehensive database that is available to the public for research and educational purposes through this website.

Migration Policy Institute

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/>

Founded in 2001 by well-known scholars of immigration, MPI tries to propose policy solutions that benefit both immigrants and their countries of origin and immigration.

National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

<http://www.nnirr.org/drupal/>

The NNIRR works to defend and expand the rights of all immigrants and refugees, regardless of immigration status. Since its founding in 1986, the organization has drawn membership from diverse immigrant communities, and actively builds alliances with social and economic justice partners around the country.

Pew Research Center Hispanic Trends

<http://www.pewhispanic.org/>

A nonpartisan fact tank that informs the public about the issues, attitudes, and trends shaping America and the world. The Center conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis, and other data-driven social science research

TRAC Immigration Project

<http://trac.syr.edu/immigration>

An organization devoted to systematically gathering detailed information from the government sources, checking it for accuracy and completeness, and making it available in an understandable way. TRAC seeks to separate clearly written reports on important immigration matters, including criminal enforcement of immigration laws, along with a clear explanatory text. It provides an extensive library of reports on immigration matters from various government agencies.