

**Faculty of Letters and Languages – M’sila**

**Department of English**

**Level:** Second year license

**Course:** American Civilisation

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## **Lecture Three: The People: Settlement and Immigration**

### **The First Wave: Colonial Immigration: 1680-1776**

The largest group of immigrants (voluntary newcomers) were the **Scots-Irish**. With encouragement from the English, their ancestors left Scotland for northern Ireland in the 1500s. Yet, roughly a quarter of a million of them left northern Ireland for the American colonies after 1680 because of economic discrimination by the English. Most paid their passage across the Atlantic by becoming indentured servants. When their term of service was finished, they usually took their ‘freedom dues’ (a small sum of money and tools) and settled on the frontier where land was cheapest. Constantly looking for better land, the Scots-Irish are the source of the stereotype of frontier folk, who feel it is time to move if they can see the smoke from a neighbor's chimney. This moving scattered their settlements from western New England to the hill country of Georgia and made it difficult to preserve their cultural heritage.

The period's 200.000 **German** immigrants aroused more opposition than the Scots-Irish. The largest non-English speaking group in the colonies, they believed their descendants had to learn German if their religion and culture were to survive in North America. For mutual support, they concentrated their settlements. In the middle colonies, German families lived so closely together in some areas that others found it hard to settle among them. Like the Scots-Irish, the Germans lived on the frontier, but they usually stayed behind when settlement moved farther west. Developing German-speaking towns, they kept to themselves and showed little interest in colonial politics. For some immigrants, the last straw was the Germans’ prosperity. Renowned for their hard work, caution, farming methods and concern for their property, they were too successful, according to their envious neighbors. Benjamin Franklin expressed what many feared when he said they might ‘Germanize us instead of us Anglicizing them’.

Other smaller groups in the first wave showed the contrasting ways in which immigrants could adjust to new and varied conditions. **England sent some 50,000 convicts and perhaps 30,000 poor people** as indentured servants to ease problems at home while supplying the labor-starved colonial economy, and these people formed an underclass that quickly Americanized. Immigration from **Ireland** included thousands of single, male, Irish Catholic indentured servants, who assimilated even more rapidly than the Scots-Irish, because of religious discrimination and the difficulty of finding Catholic wives. **The Scots**, perhaps because of their hatred of English attempts to suppress their culture at home, followed a pattern more like that of the Germans, using compact settlement, religion, schooling and family networks to preserve their culture for generations in rural areas.

This first wave of immigration transformed the demography of the colonies. By 1776 English dominance had decreased from four-fifths to a bare majority (52 percent) of the population. The great diversity of the peoples in the country led Thomas Paine, the colonies' most famous political agitator, to call the US a 'nation of nations' at its founding. African-American slaves composed 20 percent of this population and were a majority in large parts of the southern colonies.

### **The Second Wave of Immigrations: “The Old” Immigrants. 1820-1890**

Between 1776 and the late 1820s, immigration slowed to a trickle. The struggle for independence and the founding of the nation Americanized the colonies' diverse peoples. The dominant Anglo-American culture and time weakened the old ethnic communities. Dutch and German areas of influence remained locally strong, but most ethnic groups assimilated. In the 1820s most Americans and newcomers therefore thought the situation was unprecedented when the second wave gathered strength. A range of factors pushed Europeans from their homelands. Religious persecution drove many German Jews to emigrate, and political unrest forced out some European intellectuals and political activists, but economic push factors were decisive for most of the so-called 'old' north-western immigrants. Europe's population doubled between 1750 and 1850. In Ireland and parts of Germany rural people depended on the potato, which yielded more food per acre than grain.

The largest immigrant groups, in order of size, were **Germans, Irish, Britons** and **Scandinavians**, but many other peoples, including French Canadians, Chinese, Swiss and Dutch,

also came in large numbers. The factor that pulled most people to the USA was an apparently unlimited supply of land. Few seriously considered the claims of Native Americans. Another pull factor was work. The USA needed both skilled and unskilled labor. American railroad companies as well as state and territorial governments sent immigration agents to Europe to recruit people with promises of cheap fertile farms or jobs with wages much higher than they could earn at home. News of boom times in the USA, land giveaways such as the Homestead Act of 1862 and the discovery of gold in California brought peaks in the rising immigration.

### **Settlement Patterns and Nativism**

During the 1800s, the industrial revolution and an international trade boom spread from Britain to the Continent and the USA during this period, but reached different regions at different times. While the newcomers settled everywhere, they were most numerous in the manufacturing centers of the north-east and the recently settled farmlands and frontier cities of the mid-west and Pacific coast. Immigrants found many economic niches, supplying much of the market for domestic servants, mill and factory workers, miners, loggers, sailors, fishermen and building workers.

British immigrants seemed nearly invisible because they spoke English and Anglo-Americans' culture was much like theirs. White and Protestant, Scandinavians had language problems that made them seem slow to comprehend, and at times they were ridiculed for their homeland ways. Nativism (the dislike of people and things foreign) plagued many 'old' immigrants in spite of their apparent similarity to native-born Americans. Germans were welcomed for their technical knowledge and industry, and admired for a culture that was Europe's most respected at that time. But they were also criticized for clannishness, and were targets of temperance movements that attacked their habit of drinking in beer halls after church on Sundays. German Jews were excluded from education and the professions and were shunned in many social circles. The Irish suffered many forms of discrimination and were often stereotyped as dirty, violent drunks. The most serious opposition they faced, however, came from anti-Catholic bigots, who burned convents and churches as early as the 1830s. Anti-foreign agitation reached its first peak in the 1850s. Another arose in the 1860s in the west and achieved its goal, the Chinese Exclusion Act, which ended Chinese immigration in 1882. Racism and the

fear of unemployment and depressed wages motivated the labor organizations that spearheaded the campaign.

### **The Third Wave of Immigration: The “New” Immigrants. 1890-1930**

The ‘new’ immigration marked a change in the origin of most immigrants. Around 1890 immigration from north-western Europe declined sharply (but did not stop), while arrivals from southern and eastern Europe rose. By 1907, four out of five newcomers were ‘new’ immigrants. Between 1890 and 1914, the volume of immigration also soared, topping a million annually several times and equaling the 15.5 million of the old immigration in just twenty-four years. In numerical order, the largest ‘new’ groups were Italians, Jews, Poles and Hungarians, but many Mexicans, Russians, Czechs, Greeks, Portuguese, Syrians, Japanese, Filipinos and others also immigrated.

By the late 1800s falling train and steam-ship ticket prices (often prepaid by relatives in America) made migration affordable even for the very poor and the young. Cheap travel also permitted people to see immigration as a short-term strategy, and many new immigrants were sojourners, ‘birds of passage’, who stayed only long enough to save money to buy land or a small business in the old country. In general, the new immigrants were younger, more often unmarried, and more likely to travel as individuals rather than in family groups. The opportunities in America had changed too. Less than a quarter of the newcomers found employment in agriculture. The Japanese in California are the best example of those who succeeded by buying unwanted land and making it productive. Four-fifths of immigrants went where the jobs were: to the industries in the big cities of the north-east and mid-west. America had an enormous need for factory workers, but, due to mechanization, most jobs were unskilled and poorly paid.

### **The Fourth Wave of Immigration: 1965 to the Present.**

The 1960s ushered in the fourth major wave of immigration, which rose to a peak in the late 1990s and produced the highest immigration totals in American history by the end of the decade. The wave has included hundreds of thousands of immediate relatives of people already living in the U.S. and refugees outside. It has also contained millions of illegal aliens, who cross borders without (or with false) papers or arrive at airports on student or tourist visas and then overstay. Between 1960 and 2007 nearly 39 million people settled legally in America. Countries

with most immigrants in 2007 for example, are Canada, The Philippines, China, India, and Vietnam.

At the socio-economic bottom of this wave are often recently arrived groups of refugees from wars and other disasters. In the 1960s and early 1970s huge groups of people fled south-east Asia to the USA as a result of America's involvement in the Vietnam War. The poorest also include people who obtain visas because they are near-relatives of recent, more skilled immigrants or who take jobs Americans do not want. Among the latter are Latino women recruited by agencies as live-in domestic servants and nannies.

The nationalities and skin colors of most people in this wave are different and more various, however, and they arrive in different ways and settle in different places. These large foreign-born settlements have given rise to contemporary forms of racism and nativism. Groping for ways to adjust to the changes in their country's population, some Americans are again restoring to broad stereotypes.

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### **Exercises:**

#### **1- Explain and examine the significance of the following names and terms:**

Illegal Immigrants - Americanised - Refugees - Frontier - Emigrants - Immigrants - Stereotypes.

**2- To what extent do you think the American Dream is applicable to non-American immigrants? Support your answer with examples from what you know about the American history of immigration.**

### **REFERENCES**

O'callaghan, Bryn.. 2008. *An Illustrated History of the U.S.A.* New York: The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

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## **Classroom Activity: PUSH AND PULL FACTORS**

Push factors are those that force the individual to move voluntarily, and in many cases, they are forced because the individual [may] risk something if they stay. Push factors may include conflict, drought, famine, or extreme religious activity.

Poor economic activity and lack of job opportunities are also strong push factors for migration. Other strong push factors include race and discriminating cultures, political intolerance and persecution of people who question the status quo.

On the other hand, "Pull factors" are defined in the following manner:

Pull factors are those factors in the destination country that attract the individual or group to leave their home. Those factors are known as place utility, which is the desirability of a place that attracts people. Better economic opportunities, more jobs, and the promise of a better life often pull people into new locations.

Sometimes individuals have ideas and perceptions about places that are not necessarily correct, but are strong pull factors for that individual. As people grow older and retire, many look for places with warm weather, peaceful and comfortable locations to spend their retirement after a lifetime of hard work and savings. Such ideal places are pull factors too.

Very often, people consider and prefer opportunities closer to their location than similar opportunities farther away. In the same vein, people often like to move to places with better cultural, political, climatic and general terrain in closer locations than locations farther away. It is rare to find people move over very long distances to settle in places that they have little knowledge of.

- **In spite of its remote location, the USA has been attracting many people to leave their countries and settle there. In your opinion, what are the factors that play a crucial role in this process: the push factors or the pull ones? Answer in a well-structured paragraph.**