

Immigration



"Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses
yearning to breath free."

Emma Lazarus, Poet

Despite the fact that some of the nation's most creative and visionary minds are immigrants or the sons and daughters of immigrants, why do we grapple so much with the issue of immigration? Throughout human history, people have moved from one location to another for many reasons. Factors such as religious persecution and famines trigger emigration, or leaving one's home country and moving into a different country. Those who seek hope for a new beginning or economic prosperity, emigrate into another country to fulfill their dreams and aspirations. Immigration, such as those who arrived in the United States, is inextricably linked to civil society, economic security, and national security.

Supporters and opponents of United States immigration policy make valid arguments for and against. Yet, some politicians are reluctant to address the topic of immigration for fear of not being re-elected. There are many stakeholders, advocates, and special interest groups who attempt to influence legislators by proclaiming compassion or the rule of law. An educated and participatory citizenry ensures that legislators listen to and consider the voices and concerns of those people responsible for their election to public office.

History reveals quite a bit about people who came to this country, their contributions, and the manner in which immigration laws have been enacted over the years. While America is built upon the Democratic principles of freedom, justice and equality, it is interesting that our most symbolic reference to those principles was actually a gift from France. Edouard de Laboulaye, a French historian and scholar of America and its constitutional system of law, proposed that a memorial be built. The infamous Statue of Liberty arrived in the New York Harbor in June 1885 as a gift from the people of France. It stands on Ellis Island, as an international beacon of hope for the millions of people who left Europe and Asia to begin new lives in the United States. Engraved on a plaque inside the Statue of Liberty is a poem by Emma Lazarus. "The New Colossus," written in 1883, is a testament to the poet's witnessing of refugees arriving in New York on a tramp steamer.