Immigrants Essay, Research Paper

Should the United States take on more immigrants? Is the United States hurting from immigration problems? These issues have been debated on for generation. “According to the Immigration and Naturalization Service, approximately 300,000 illegal immigrants enter the United States annually” (Cozic 12). This large number of immigrants causes many different emotions. For some Americans, immigration is an adversity. Many Americans past and present have reacted to immigrants with fear: fear of unemployment and lower standards of living, fear of different religions and races, fear that immigration is spoiling the U.S. for those already here. The issues of immigration has three important topics: first, the understanding of the history behind immigration. Second, the effect immigration has on the United States. Third and finally, the economic issues associated with immigration today.

The history of immigration in the United States is quite interesting. Between 1820, when the U.S. begin keeping count, and 1987, over fifty-four million people left their former homes and migrated to the U.S. (McClellan 12). With the exception of native Americans and African-American descendants of slaves, everyone in the U.S. today is an immigrant or is descended from immigrates. It is really quite interesting that Americans today feel so strongly against immigration when if fact they themselves are immigrants. “Today the United States takes in more immigrants than all of the other world’s nations combined” (Dudley 13). However, even though these facts are true, Americans seem to continue to fear immigration.

During the late 1980 the government passed a immigration act called the Simpson-Rodio Act. This allowed all illegal immigrates living in the country since 1982, legalization. “This allowed more than 3 million aliens to live here” (Griffin, 363). It also gave employers strict fines for hiring illegal immigrants without documentation. “The idea behind the employer sanctions was to diminish or eliminate the demand for undocumented workers, there by reducing their incentives to enter the country” (McConnell 731). This did in fact slow down the number of illegal aliens simple because their was no jobs that existed for them. However, some illegal immigrates were once legal, with a visa. This gave them the right to work in the United States; however, the visa expired making them illegal. “Experts say roughly 40 percent of the 200,000 to 300,000 people who become permanent illegal residents each year are actually people who overstay visas” (Griffin 372). Therefore, by legalizing !

a large number of illegal immigrates didn’t help the situation nor did the strict laws on business. In fact it only caused people to come up with better way to get around the system.

The problem with immigration isn’t that the United States doesn’t allow it. Right now the United States accepts about 700,000 immigrants legally each year, more than the rest of the world put together (McConner 733).However, what possibly could happen if the United States closed all of its boarders. Ruben Bonilla, president of the 100,000-member League of United Latin-Americans Citizens, argues that “undocumented workers, in addition to playing a positive role in the economy, actually increase tax revenue by paying for Social Security service they seldom use” (McClellan 42). The problem with just outlawing immigration is that, Mexico especially would self destroy. The economy of Mexico would fall and the United States could run the risk of a Socialistic society coming in. So to just outlaw of immigration would not benefit the United States in the long run.

Therefore, in what ways are immigration benefiting the United States. Obviously, legal immigration has profoundly influences U.S. society. According to Rodman Griffin “Numerous studies conclude that migrants enhance productivity in a number of ways” (364). Legal immigrants take on seasonal jobs that most Americans won’t do, immigrants work hard, and they pay taxes. All of these things are beneficial to the U.S. According to Dudley, author of Immigration; Opposing Viewpoints,

Compared to natives, immigrants save more, apply more effort during working hours, have twice as great a propensity to be self-employed, have higher rates of participation in the labor force and are unusually self-reliant and innovation(81).

However, their are the illegal immigrates that live a life of mystery. Meaning, that they don’t benefit the economy in anyway. They usually get paid under the table and contribute no taxes in the system. In effect many of these workers find it hard to get work. Eventually they begin to strain public services. By Law, illegal immigrants are bared from receiving federal welfare payments and a range of other benefits, including food stamps and unemployment compensation. However, in some states their are ways around the system.

Whether Americans like it or not, once immigrants are here they have certain rights guaranteed by the Constitution. In earlier ears, however, some Americans assumed that undocumented aliens did not have any right whatsoever. Talk of a right to an American education , for example, would have been dismissed out of hand. According the Cozic “in the Texas School Case, five of nine justices of the U.S. Supreme court ruled that children of illegal aliens had a constitutional right to public education” (76). This ruling was justified by the Fourteenth Amendment statement about equal protection regardless of the citizen status. According to Dudley, author of Immigration; Opposing Viewpoints, the courts believed that

education was a fundamental role in maintaining the fabric of our society…to deny children the right of education, would in the long run add to the problems and costs of unemployment, welfare, and crimes(367).

However, in January of 1997 the court found that just because a child was born in the United States, it is not a citizen. This in effect would eliminate some of the benefits that the child would receive. This does provide some hope; however, their are many “citizen children” that allow illegal immigrates to receive benefits. Most of the time it is the “legal child” that allows the family to relieve federal aid. In effect, immigration ends up costing the U.S. large amounts of money for this very reason. For example, a study done in 1993 by Carrying Capacity Network, a nonprofit organization, found that $4.4 billion went into primary-secondary education for illegal immigrate children.

Immigrates do receive other forms of governmental aid. For example all illegal have the right to apply for political asylum, a process that can take more than a year and effectively prolong their stay in the United States. Though relatively few illegals have a realistic hope of gaining asylum status, and increasing number are applying, knowing the system can’t handle them. those awaiting a ruling on asylum requests often take jobs and meld into the underground economy.

So what makes illegal immigrants so attracted to the United States? Fact of the matter is, the United States has more available jobs then most countries surrounding us “because of more capital equipment and more advanced technologies which enhance the productivity of labor” (McCall, 731). Because the United States wages are higher and therefore it is very beneficial for them to move. However, with these immigrates comes a problems with unemployment. According to Charles Cozic, author of Illegal Immigration, for “each 100 working low-skilled immigrates their are 25 displaced U.S. low-skilled workers” (75-76) So even though the cost for the immigrates to move to the United States is less then the large benefits they receive, some Americans feel the effects by unemployment. For these unemployed workers the government turns around and provides public services for displaced workers. In 1994 the government arrived at an adjusted total cost of $3.6 to $4.6 billion due to displa!

cement. So just because the government isn’t paying for the legal immigrates directly, it is paying for immigrations effects on American workers.

On a different level, immigration today is causing many environmental and resource issues. Each additional immigrant, regardless of his or her personal qualifications and merits, swells our numbers and further increases the already dangerous level of environmental pollution. Each year the pollution problem is announced as getting worse, yet we continue to except more and more people into our all ready growing nation. For each additional immigrate, that this country legalizes, decrease the amount of natural resource available. For example, land is slowly become more scare. What use to be farm land has been developed, making society depend more on outside resource. The world is moving ever more deeply into the realm of shortages. Every increase in population brings an increase in the per capita cost of reducing pollution. The problem with population is increasing drastically. As the population increases so does the amount of vehicle on the road causing traffic gridlock!

and carbon dioxide pollution.

Immigration problems can be better example through the example of the supply and demand curve. If one was to take a look at the percentage that our society demands in the labor force each year, they would discover that even without the legalization of immigrates Americans can well fit that demand. However, the United States keeps on supplying the county with more and more people making the supply of workers out way the demand. Another example is the extreme amounts of illegal immigrates on public services. When the Simpson-Rodio Act passed this caused illegal immigrates to lose their jobs. Which in effect, put more immigrates on public services. Right now in the United States the demand for public services is much higher then the supply of worker contributing to the system.

The arguments for and against immigration has three important subject matters: first, the understanding of the history behind immigration. Second, the outcome immigration has on the United States. Third and finally, the economic questions associated with migration today. Even though immagration can be a benifit to the United States it does bring the country down in others.

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