Immigration Essay, Research Paper

Immigration Immigration has always impacted our country in a bigway. American immigration first began in 1492 whenChristopher Columbus sailed west to find new land, which isnow known as The United States. People have left theirnative lands for a variety of reasons: religious or racialpersecution, lack of political freedom, and economicdeprivation. The forces that attracted them to newhomelands were the opposites of these: religious andpolitical freedom, ethnic toleration, and economicopportunity. After the Civil War, America began to grow andland was plentiful. Due to the low birthrate in the early1900 s, their was a demand for labor and there wasinsufficient people to supply the need. In turn,immigration supplied the nation with the labor it needed andit provided these immigrants with land and freedom. This great influx of immigrants throughout 1880 – 1920brought many nationalities into the United States. Irish,Asians, Russians, Italians, and Jews were the majority ofthe immigrants that came to America during this time. Thereason why most of these immigrants relocated was due to theindustrialization in Europe. The transformation from smallagriculture based societies to manufacturing economies was Tenreiro 2 so rapid that it became known as the IndustrialRevolution. The Industrial Revolution swept across Europecausing many economic and social changes. Although Irelanddid not industrialize until the end of the 19th century, ahuge potato famine and the replacement of small farms bylarger estates produced mass migrations of displaced people. Eight million immigrants entered the United States inthe first decade of the 20th century, five million in the1910 s, and four million in the 1920 s. In the early partof the century Japanese Americans constituted the largestgroup of Asian immigrants. The Japanese came to America insearch for better jobs. They primarily engaged inagricultural pursuits in California, Oregon, and Washington. Russian immigrants migrated to the United States insearch for political freedom. At this time, Russia wasunder political corruption and it provided few opportunitiesfor its natives. The migration to America provided theRussians with the freedom they were in search of. Italian immigrants to the United States did not usuallysettle in the large, urban centers of America. Most of them settled in smaller factory towns, mining villages, and farmsin rural areas establishing their own communities. TheItalians provided America with many skilled workers andAmerica provided these Italians with many job opportunities. America advertised religious freedom in those countries

that persecuted certain religious affiliations. The Tenreiro 3 immigration of the Jews brought more of an open religionbarrier on the U.S. as well as providing them with educatedpeople and some skilled workers. Immigrants were encouraged to participate in Americaninstitutions. However, by 1917 a literacy test forimmigrants was enacted. This test convinced the Americansthat there were too many immigrants in the United States. Therefore, the Immigration Act of 1917 was passed. This Actexpanded the class of foreigners excluded from the UnitedStates. It also designated an Asiatic Barred Zone, whichwas a geographic region encircling much of eastern Asia andthe Pacific Islands. The immigrants from these areas wouldnot be admitted to the United States. Aliens who wereunable to meet minimal mental, moral, physical, and economicstandards were excluded. Most of the basic provisions ofthe Immigration Act of 1917 were retained in subsequentrevisions of the immigration law. Most immigrants that arrived to the United States,regardless of ethnicity, where subjected to muchdiscrimination. The Native Americans were mostly prejudicedagainst the Irish immigrants. Since the Irish took many ofthe jobs away from the public, the Americans that remainedunemployed disliked the Irish. At the same time, the restof the immigrants, including Asians, Russians and Jews, thatcame to the United States were treated with little respect. Tenreiro 4 In the late 19th century American Natives grewincreasingly hostile towards Asian immigrants. Having nopolitical representation these Asian immigrants had verylittle power. Asian workers, especially the Chinese, oftencame to the United States under contract to Americanemployers, who financed their transportation. This resultedin the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This suspended anyfurther entry of most Chinese immigrants into the UnitedStates. Immigration had numerous effects on the United States. Since the low-class Asians and Russians provided cheaplabor, they replaced the American laborers. This upset theAmerican public in which the result was poor jobopportunities for generations to come. In the positiveaspect, this lowered the price of American labor making iteasier to produce more for less. Immigration also broughtmany diseases as well as economic deprivation, war betweennations, and an increase in crime. As the war between the states came to an end in the mid1800 s, there was much work to be done in a nation that wasgrowing rapidly. Therefore, America encouraged immigrationin order to restore their land. America offered thepotential newcomers a life of political freedom, religioustolerance, and economic opportunity.

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