Immigration And The U.S. Essay, Research Paper

Immigration and the U.S.

What is the meaning of immigration? Immigration is the passing or coming into a country to which one is not native for the purpose of permanent residence. The agency responsible for creating and enforcing laws for immigration in the United States is the INS, or Immigration and Naturalization Service. There are many factors that cause people to immigrate, especially to the U.S.; some factors are so alluring that people come into the country illegally. INS has expanded and adjusted to the increase in immigration over many years, especially to illegal immigration. The question to be determined is whether the INS abuses it s power by treating legal or illegal immigrants unjustly.

People do not enjoy leaving their home and moving into a new country. Factors that cause humans to immigrate to a different place include: quality of life, war, employment, natural disasters, economic problems, poverty, joining relatives, better education, and a desire for freedom. It is known worldwide that there are many educational and employment opportunities in the U.S. The quality of education in the United States draws many aliens (immigrants) from their native countries. This gives younger school bound immigrants an opportunity for financial stability and an opportunity to rise in economic status. In order for these immigrants to be admitted into the U.S., the INS must determine whether they qualify to enter and reside here. Many of the applicants are denied, and that is when illegal immigration occurs.

The INS is an agency that was created to regulate the admission of non-U.S. citizens into the U.S. Immigration was for the most part unregulated and free prior to the late 1800s, but that changed after the Civil War. In 1875, the Supreme Court declared that regulation was needed due to the increase of Asian and European immigration. Regulation then began in 1891, after the Immigration Act was passed. This gave the Superintendent of Immigration total control over immigration, including inspections at all major seaports and enforcement of laws. The officers in these inspection stations determined if the arriving aliens could come into the country, or if they would return home. The increase in immigration since the 1880 s resulted in the addition of many new services offered at ports of entry. Marian L. Smith wrote, Ellis Island housed inspection facilities, hearing and detention rooms, hospitals, cafeterias, administrative offices, railroad ticket offices, and representatives of many immigrant aid societies. Ellis Island station also employed 119 of the Immigrations Service s entire staff of 180 in 1883 (1). This forced Immigration Services to hire more employees. In 1906 Congress passed the Naturalization Act, joined with the Immigration Act, it created the Immigration and Naturalization Services. Since then, the INS has had total control over immigration by creating and enforcing immigration laws. Other duties of this agency involve work authorization, naturalization, border control, detention and removal of criminal aliens, deportations, denial of ineligible applicants, limiting the number of immigrants per year, assigning green cards (resident alien cards) and maintaining port-of-entry inspections. Now the INS staff has grown to over 29,000 employees and is scattered over thirty-six districts. The requirements for legal resident status have become harder to meet, and the yearly allowance of immigrants has been reduced since the 1900 s. This has resulted in more illegal immigration into the U.S. According to an INS publication, About 5.0 million undocumented immigrants were residing in the United States in October 1996, with a range of 4.6 t 5.4 million (1). The budget that was created for the INS, had to be increased by millions to compensate for the costs of border patrol and to pay the extra employees needed to maintain the inspection stations and offices. With such a large agency, it is hard to keep an eye on everything they do. This is when power is abused and immigrants are mistreated.

In recent years the INS has become stricter with their regulations. To come into the country, you must either have a valid green card or visa. There are many types of visas including student, temporary employment, visitor, fianc e and refugee. The process to receive a visa is long and complex. Many forms and paper work have to be completed, pictures and fingerprints are collected, a valid passport must be submitted, and interviews are performed to decide if the applicant is qualified to reside in the country. From my own personal experience, the process of interrogation was demeaning; with questioning that lasted for hours and made me feel like a common criminal. An example of mistreatment from personal experience is: in interviews, applicants are questioned for hours, like criminals are interrogated (feels like you committed a crime and are going to prison). When aliens come into the country by plane or sea, they are asked many questions in an Immigration Office that is located at the port-of-entry. Illegal immigrants are sometimes beaten and abused before being taken to detention rooms prior to deportation. These are just a few of the mistreatments by the INS that can occur on a daily basis.

INS is an agency that has good and bad attributes. It regulates the number of immigrants coming into the country, qualifies persons before letting them enter the U.S., patrols borders to prevent illegal aliens from sneaking in and issues green cards to immigrants that have proven they are worthy of staying in the United States. However, because the criteria have become so stringent, many possible candidates are disqualified because the annual limit has been exceeded. On the other hand, INS clerks and inspection officers treat aliens that have visas disrespectfully. They receive the same treatment illegal immigrants do. This raises different questions. Has the government given INS too much power? Is all of this immigration regulation necessary? How are applicants treated? Americans might believe that immigrants are not treated badly, but you should ask the people that have experienced INS policy, the immigrants.