Immigration 2 Essay, Research Paper

Immigration:

To first understand immigration one most look at why it is taking place. America, the great land of the free, created a new opportunity for many people from foreign countries to live out their dreams. It was a fast growing and very strong nation with lots of economic opportunities, from the gold rush and the building of the Rail Road to the many other new and growing areas of development. Each region of the world had their own reason for coming, but as individuals they all strived for similar goals. However, this freedom would come at a great cost to those who came. Horrible work conditions, low wages, and over-crowded living made it very hard for immigrants to become part of the American culture. Some immigrants were especially noted for not adapting to the American culture. Those who did not “Americanize” would be viewed as a threat to the American culture. This presented the country with another problem, the start of racial tensions among the New Immigrants and the people of the United States. Local employers were not the only ones take advantage of immigrants, but also by the older immigrants would exploited their own people in fraudulent ways. This new wave of immigration brought both strengths and problems, each of which will be examined through testimony of those who lived to tell and by written documents describing this complex process of movement.

Why would one choose to leave their native land? The first reason is that America was seen as the land of the free with plenty of opportunity. In this country one could practice whatever religion they wanted without fear of being persecuted by their local government. Political freedom was another reason for immigrating to the United States. For instance, many European countries would be operating under very strict rulers. They would not be granted their individuality, so they came to America to gain pride, self-respect and hope of a better life. Others would come for financial reasons, for example, the Chinese would come and work under very poor conditions and get paid very little by our standards. To the Chinese it was much better than the conditions in China. This ability to work long hours for little pay pushed many locals out of their jobs and created very strong resentment towards the Chinese. Although immigration eventually would enrich our culture and help our economic status they brought with them a number of problems.

Many people were tricked into coming to America by those who promised a good and profitable lifestyle. Mislead by the promise of high paying jobs many Italians were exploited by the “Padroni”. Known as the Padrone System, many Italian immigrants were forced to work for very low pay in squalid conditions. They were then forced into debt and would have to spend most income on paying their debt to the “Padroni’. Not only were they tricked by their own people, immigrants were under close examination by the local government. The formation of the Immigration Restriction League (IRL) , would slow down the rate of immigration by calling for certain requirements before allowing one to enter the country. Some of these requirements were taking a written test paying a entrance fee, and having enough money to provide to family until settled.

Constant mistreatment of newly arriving immigrants lead to a number of changes with in their lives. These changes were brought about by organized movements such as the Labor Movement, that would bring higher wages, less work hours and better working conditions. Not only did these strikes bring physical change, they also gave immigrants a chance to talk and relate to each other to relieve stress. Not all Americans hated immigrants, a Humanist by the name of Jane Adams, would offer immigrants who lived in run down ghettos a chance to succeed in their new environment. She did this by founding the Hull House, located in Chicago, which any immigrant could go visit to learn to read and speak English. It also gave many poor a sense of worth, which had been lost in their new environment.

By 1921, America sought to slow down the rate of immigration by drafting up an act that would selectively limit who could come to the states by a process called the “Quota System”. In 1924 the Immigration Act would again greatly reduce the number of immigrants by at least 50% of normal. This act was said to have been created because America could no longer provide for those newcomers at a current level of acceptance. It was not until 1965 that this immigration act would be repealed. Currently it is much harder for people to come and live in the United States.

The United States is and will probably always be the largest world magnet for migration for a number of reasons. America stands for freedom and offers equality to all under the law, which is why so many people have desired to live here. There are also many opportunities for success as well as a respect for cultural diversity that contributes to America’s greatness. While some might say that immigrants only brought disease and other problems, one can not overlook the good that they contributed. Not only did immigrants contribute to the economic well being of the nation, they also strengthened our nations ties with those of other countries. Over time they would greatly influence and help to increase our culture and language recourse

322