



**Should the United States Immigration Policy be Changed?**

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Common Reading Essay Contest Winner

From the Freshman Common Reading Program

Text: Sonia Nazario's *Enrique's Journey*

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"Remember, remember always, that all of us, you and I especially,  
are desc

opinion of many affluent Americans which led to the Quota Act of 1921. As reported by Williams, after the stringent Quota Act of 1921, the influx of immigrants once again began when Congress passed the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965

to 1.5 million annually (4). State officials see immigration growth as a threat to their local economy.

Economic, social, ethical, and political issues have appeared as a result of the influx of immigrants. As Sonia Nazario ( ) explained in her lecture, it is not an easy issue to discuss. Most people do not want to know about the social issues when they are depressing and disheartening. When people hear of jobs being threatened and welfare being used, they are against immigrants regardless of the hardships they endured to get here.

When viewing governmental statistics, it is easy to see why many people are against illegal immigration and amnesty in an economic sense. The Center for Immigration Studies estimates the cost to the government by illegal aliens not paying taxes is \$10.4 billion per year. (Lopez 4) The U.S. Department of Labor reports that illegal immigrants take jobs that would be filled by American citizens and legal immigrants. Money sent to illegal immigrants' families in other countries also negatively impacts the economy. In 2005, Mexico's central bank reported that \$20 billion was sent from the United States to Mexicans. (Lopez 5) Health care is another issue. In the United States, law requires hospitals to treat anyone who needs emergency care. In Texas and Arizona, hospitals have reported over \$75 million in uncompensated costs. (Lopez 7)

Some opponents to immigration contend that it changes our American culture. They propose that immigrants will challenge the laws and change the culture of the American people. They cite examples such as the town in El Cenizo, Texas that adopted Spanish as its official language rather than English and that fact that schools have been forced to hire many more ESL teachers than in the past. President Bush saw this issue as the face of a New America. He had his speeches translated to Spanish and published on the White House website. Others see immigration as a positive trend for the United States. As immigrants move to the United States



see how these oppressed people can be helped. The process for obtaining United States citizenship is complicated and expensive. The process can also take years. Naturalization is the process in which a person can obtain U.S. citizenship. The immigration policy requirements vary depending on the characteristics of the applicant. Most applicants have to have been here for five years with physical presence from 18-30 months. ("Immigration Policy in the United States" 18)

As indicated by Nazario, many of the immigrants are women and children. Women from Latin American countries see no other way to provide for their children than to try to enter the United States in order to send money back. When their mothers leave, the children then began the illegal entrance into the United States in search of their mothers. As indicated by Enrique's story and many others, deportation is not the answer. They will continue to try until they are either killed or successful. The Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act was developed to address the approximately 65,000 undocumented students in the United States. Many of these students were brought to the country as small children have not known any country other than the United States. Most are bilingual and did not know they were not legal residents until they began applying for driver's licenses or for college admissions. The DREAM Act would be a positive move for the United States by reducing drop-out rate, increasing taxable income, and increasing educational opportunities for illegal adolescents. ("The DREAM Act" 2)

Some ways to help these immigrants as listed by Nazario are to create jobs in the countries where the most immigrants are originating. By creating jobs, these immigrants would have a livelihood to support their families and would not be trying to enter the United States in order to get a job. The communities would be self-supporting and future generations would have



daily. It will take a committee of people on both sides looking at the best solutions for each of these issues and taking the step to do something in a positive manner. Not everyone is going to agree with the policy but it needs changes to help the immigrants who want to come to the United States and to help with those who are here illegally who want to stay. As Nazario stated immigrants bring “new blood, new ideas, and new ways of looking at things that drive creativity and spur advances” (253).

More than two-thirds of Americans think the government should reduce immigration from the current level as reported by Nazario (258). The Immigration Policy Center indicates that comprehensive immigration reform would actually stimulate the economy. (Hinojosa-Ojeda 1) It indicates that reform would allow unauthorized immigrants to become citizens and would lead to increases in tax revenues, increase in consumer spending, increase in home buying and an increase in new businesses. (Hinojosa-Ojeda 1)

Some solutions offered by Kane and Johnson are worth considering. They advocate a guest worker program. They support a biometric identification (fingerprints, retina scans) for guest workers that can be accessed nationwide. They maintain incentives for compliance with the guest worker program and an incentive for unauthorized workers to sign up rather than the punitive deportation threat. Immigration reform would need to include less red tape for companies and individuals who need guest workers.(Kane and Johnson 3-6) Riley wrote that officials at Department of Homeland Security feel it would help to nationalize the illegal aliens that are already here so that they could track their activities. The officials also indicated that increased security should be paired with a plan for more lawful ways for migrants to enter and get legitimate jobs. (Riley 202-205) Nazario ( ) had suggestions for improving the countries from which most immigrants migrate. She included ideas for providing loans,



developing trade policies, promoting education, developing democratic governments, and implementing family planning. By strengthening these poorer countries, it would lessen their desire to come to America because they would have a livelihood to provide for their children. These solutions and ideas could be part of the reformed immigration policy.

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