

Government 2305

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Illegal Immigration in America

In the acclaimed sonnet “The New Colossus” American poet Emma Lazarus writes, “Give us your poor, you're tired, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” Engraved within the inside of an icon of freedom, the Statue of Liberty, this statement has come to define the country of the United States of America. Even before its declaration of independence in 1776, the United States was a haven for those seeking a better life. Flocking to this country by the thousands, immigrants past and present have journeyed to the land of the free in an attempt to obtain a lifestyle based upon the United States’ concept of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.” With more and more people entering the country, the United States quickly evolved into the ultimate melting pot that welcomed any and all who desired to become a part of it.

As time has passed and millions of immigrants have ventured to the country, the United States still maintains a welcoming attitude towards new immigrants. However, with such a vast amount of foreigners who desire access into the country, entry into the United States has become much more complex since the days of Ellis Island. As a result, this new century has given rise to another kind of immigrant, the illegal immigrant. Desperate to become a part of the booming American culture, thousands upon thousands of immigrants have begun to enter the United States illegally. Ignoring the laws set forth by the American government, these immigrants enter the country and unnoticeably assimilate themselves into the culture of the United States. With the influence of several factors such as large borders and unruly citizens who refuse to uphold the law, the government essentially allows these individuals to enter the country and actually cause some major damage. Ultimately, as the United States’ government is unable to fully enforce the policies of immigration, illegal immigration is further enhanced and permitted, thereby creating more problems within the United States’ framework that threaten the well being of the country and its people.

In order to fully understand the disadvantages that have developed as a result of illegal immigration, it is crucial to also understand the evolution of immigration policies throughout the history of the United States. Looking back in the time period of Ellis Island, there were only a handful of policies and restrictions in regards to allowing immigrants into the country. The majority of immigrants in the late nineteenth century arrived in the country on boats. According to most information, the individuals who were denied entry to the United States and immediately sent back to their homeland were those who were simply deemed criminals, anarchists, or carriers of disease (Eyewitness History 1). These restrictions address one central purpose: to ensure the well being and protection of United States and its citizens. In essence, the goal to protect the country and its people has not changed and still lives on within the contemporary