

Essay on Immigration Policy

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The choice to immigrate to America is often not a choice at all. The word immigrant has now become a political term. Immigrants are now being labeled as jobstealers, border hoppers, gang members, and so many more cruel terms. People have become so heated and closed minded about this issue that they forget who is at the heart of it: human beings seeking asylum.

The United States is home to more than forty-five million immigrants. Harsh labor standards, poverty, work opportunities, war, floods, hurricanes, or other environmental factors are all factors that are forcing migrants out of their home countries onto foreign land. Immigrants are coming to America for a new life for themselves and for their families.

I was recently told the story of an immigrant who came to America twenty one years ago. Growing up, her living situation was poveric. Her family of ten was crammed into a one bedroom house, with not even a bathroom on the inside. As a child, she watched as her parents worked themselves to the bone, desperately trying to make ends meet. After getting married and having a daughter, she knew she wanted a better future than the one she was dealt. With a sparse English vocabulary in her pocket and a two year old in her arms, she left her family, her culture, and the only language she had ever spoken. She did this with the hope of bringing a brighter life for her growing family, a life of security, where her children would not have to face the same hardships as she did.

This story is not unique. In fact, it is the same story that is told by immigrants in the Bible and in America today.

The Bible is packed with stories of immigration. A well known story is the story of the Isrealites leaving the oppressive city of Egypt to live in the promised land of God. Another story that stands

out the most to me is the story of Ruth. Ruth was a Moabite woman living during the time of the judges. After the tragic deaths of her husband, father, and son in laws, Ruth was faced with a choice: stay in Moab or migrate to Bethlehem . Ruth was born and raised in Moab. She had grown accustomed to the cultures and spoke the language. Despite this, she chose to leave behind everything she knew and venture into a new kingdom solely because of her love and loyalty for her mother in law, Naomi.

Both the Isrealites and Ruth had something in common; God's love for them. God commands the Isrealites to love all the foreigners residing among them. (*New International Version* Leviticus 19:33-34). As Christians, it is our duty to look past our political opinions and recognize these people in need. Jesus did not call us to pick a political party and stick to it. He called us to live as he did, spreading his love to everyone we met. Love was at the core of all of Jesus's teachings. He commands his disciples to love everyone just as he loved us. (John 15:12-13)

It is our duty to look past the stereotypes and look at the facts of what is actually happening in the United States today. The current immigration system is infested with many flaws. It does not work for those who are immigrating or those who are already here. Making new policies and reaching out to the government is a daunting task. But it is vital to ensure the protection of basic human rights.

The immigration system's fatal flaw is that it's too restrictive. The Public Charge Rule finalized by The Department of Homeland security gives immigrant officials the power to deny a migrant entry to the country if they are likely to be in need of government funding or aid. This rule has made it unbelievably hard for families from modest backgrounds to migrate. The justification of these rules comes from the belief that the immigrants are migrating to America

and forming a parasitic relationship with the country, enjoying the benefits and privileges without giving anything back or helping out in any way. This is simply not true. Undocumented immigrants pay around nine billion dollars in taxes every year. (Internal Revenue Service) The Small Business Administrations states that immigrants are thirty percent more likely to start a small business than non immigrant, consequently creating jobs for U.S. residents. Twenty five percent of companies, including Google, EBay, Yahoo!, Sun Microsystems, and Intel, were created by immigrants. These are just a few examples of how immigrants are benefiting the economy.

We must provide ways for the working, tax-paying immigrants who are already in this country, and economically beneficial immigrants who are already in this country, to gain citizenship. Doing this would allow them to get jobs that reduce the short supply of workers in many fields which would in turn help with other problems in this country such as inflation. Having a short supply of workers is a factor in the high prices and employing immigrants would lessen that burden. Over ten million illegal immigrants have been allowed to establish lives in the United States; more than half of them have been here for more than ten years. Congress should take the initiative to offer all undocumented immigrants who haven't committed major offenses permanent legal status. This change would allow Congress to improve the current immigration policies, and take a step forward in creating a new, better working one. Congress should provide illegal immigrants who want to legalize their status the choice between the grueling route to citizenship and a straightforward path to permanent residence without U.S. citizenship. For example, the 2013 comprehensive immigration reform bill passed by the Senate established a new temporary status that required three different fees, a one thousand dollar fine, regular appearances at English language classes, a thirteen year wait period before applying for

citizenship, and an annual income equal to one hundred and twenty percent of the poverty line or no more than sixty days of unemployment. While this strategy is helpful to formerly undocumented immigrants trying to become citizens, Congress should also give them the chance to get a permanent status without having to follow the burdensome and expensive path to citizenship. This would keep them safe from deportation and enable them to work lawfully, but not take away the option for them to obtain citizenship at a higher cost.

It is a privilege to be able to not care about these issues. While we are going about our daily lives, thousands of people are being forced out of their countries. Leaving everything and everyone you have ever known behind is not an easy decision to make. The millions of people who immigrate to the United States every year are not coming here to be the center of our political debates. They are not criminals, but human beings seeking asylum for themselves and their families. It is our job as Christians to be their light in the darkness. God called us to love. He made it the center of Jesus's teachings as well as the commands he gave to his followers. We need to love everyone, regardless of where they are coming from or any previous assumptions we have made about them. That kind of love should not be given physical borders. The United States border is no exception.

Sources

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Dear Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,

My name is Stefany Cortes-Herenandez, and I am currently a senior at Freeman Academy. As a senior, I have been asked to write a paper on a topic that I am passionate about. I chose immigration. Along with the paper, I was asked to write a letter to any Congressperson of my choosing. Seeing as you are a leader of the movement for a change of the current immigration policy, I choose you. I know that changing the current immigration policies is not an easy task, but I believe it must be done to preserve the rights of those seeking asylum in this country. It is our civic duty to look past the harmful stereotypes and look at the facts of what is actually happening in the United States today. The current immigration is infested with many flaws. It does not work for those who are immigrating or those who are already here. The millions of people who immigrate to the United States every year are not coming here to be the center of our political debates. They are not criminals, but human beings seeking asylum for themselves and their families. We must stand up and act.