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Politics of Immigration

The first and foremost obstacle to the legalization and obtaining citizenship of immigrants is politics. Although it may seem distant from their daily lives, it is deeply embedded in their living conditions, legal system, and socialization process. Politics creates a trickle-down effect for immigrants. As anti-immigrant policies tend to be generally more popular with the public, immigration is a highly politicized realm, and people take on strong opinions, and in the recent few decades, social media has been fueling extremism in both ways. Media and its audience tend to highlight violent crimes as both proof and reason for social exclusion, discrimination, disproportionate criminalization and thereby creating a cycle of enforcing the privileged and blaming immigrant minorities.

Having family or acquaintances in destination countries provides a significant advantage for people immigrating after them. The people who have already assimilated into the country and culture can give helpful information, legal advice, and provide a community within a foreign setting. However, this may also cause internalization of violence and isolation in small communities. The oppression and violence the group faces may be internalized and target the women and children, more so if they are financially dependent on others. Ironically, immigrants who form local communities in response to the lack of legal recognition are then attacked by the community they created (Solórzano, 2022).

Next, in most cases, stereotyping is harmful to immigrants. There may be some rare instances where the stereotypes work for them rather than against them. For example, a Japanese

immigrant may be easily integrated into a community that likes animation and Japanese culture and a Korean immigrant may fit well into a group of people that likes K-pop. However, this kind of acceptance is rather patronizing coming from majority groups. They often own a sense of superiority and therefore are prone to appropriate minority cultures as they prefer and still claim that they respect and love the cultures. Particularly in the U.S., immigration enforcement is becoming more classed, raced, and gendered (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). Stereotypes play well into such political climates. Women, especially Asian and Latina, were historically unwelcomed and excluded from immigration through California's Proposition 187 and the 1996 Immigration and welfare reform acts, claiming that they are not needed for the U.S. workforce, and also to restrict the demographic reproduction and permanent settlements of immigrant families (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). Specifically, political campaigns constructed fear and disdain toward the reproductivity of immigrant Latinas based on racially constructed stereotypes and its threat to societal homogeneity and resources (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). However, post 9/11 and in recent decades, it is the male population that is being deported the most (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). The war on terrorism and Islamophobia fueled racism towards mostly brown and black men. This combined with the declining need for construction and manufacturing jobs in a post-industrial society, immigrant male workers were no longer demanded the same way as before (Golash-Boza & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2013). Therefore, criminality has now shifted more towards masculinity.

Precarious and semi-legality is a state with limited social and economic mobility (Bylander, 2022). Precarious legal statuses provide a way for immigrants to have temporary relief and a sense of safety but at the same time become a barrier for immigrants to become citizens. The protection is fragile and intermittent, being constantly subjected to change in

political turmoil. Precarity may enable them to participate in certain jobs, but the lack of mobility and the limitations will force them to stay in certain sectors and employees that their status allows which are usually in worse conditions that are underpaid. This will put boundaries to their wages and connections, solidifying the social and economic hierarchy.

Said hierarchy exists even within immigrant populations. Second-generation immigrants are generally better accepted as they are assimilated and cultured as Americans and do not share the fear held by the first generations about being deported, raided, and detained. The media also tends to humanize 1.5 generation students more than first generations through highlighting their similarities to Americans, thereby reducing repercussions of being publicized, if not making the whole interaction positive. This would fit in the effects of assimilation, both helping second generations and further achieve legal statuses, but deterring first generations at the same time. If Deferred Action for Parents of Americans and Lawful Permanent Residents (DAPA) were to be implemented, it could have lifted the burden off of first-generation immigrants, closing the gap between the experiences of illegality that different groups of immigrants face. It is only natural that the first generations avoid media and visibility as they are dehumanized and legally punished, but the 1.5 generation fears the media and public's eyes less as they are more understood and pardoned. DAPA attempted to provide the first generations the chance to legalize but faced opposition and political conflicts and therefore was canceled (Solórzano, 2022). Undocumented parents were excited about DAPA, hoping for a better future and life, because they thought they could finally prove that they were not criminals but hardworking, law-abiding, and moral, but such hopes were turned down due to political influences.

The governments want controlled migration in order to control the underground labor market, disproportional supply and demand of labor, distributed tax collection, and trade. Their

intentions are not necessarily to alienize immigrants but differential immigration provides them with a way to identify and distinguish between the candidates they want and not. The demand for unskilled labor declined slowly as construction and production jobs declined. Service jobs and skilled jobs inclined and that was reflected in the immigrant labor demand.

According to Arriga (2016), the range of citizenship and its rights are becoming narrower with crimmigation, the ideology and practice of combining criminal and immigration law. The mixing of laws also means collaborations between Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and local law enforcement (Arriga, 2016). Criminal law historically existed to prevent and address harm to individuals from crimes of typically violence and fraud while immigration law on the other hand was specific for determining illegal and legal immigrants (Arriga, 2016). These laws were historically seen to be unrelated, but correlations started to become highlighted in the recent few decades. Maguire and King (2004) suggest that post 9/11, counterterrorism, the need for criminal intelligence gathering, and hazard mitigation gave a rationale for merging two different types of laws together (Arriga, 2016). In response, criminalizing immigrants and therefore branding them illegal or undocumented migrants became a more fluid process. Unironically, ICE is also using preexisting jails and prisons for immigration detention centers (Arriga, 2016).

Similarly, immigrant-receiving countries are using various methods to control or reduce immigration. For example, Australia is strongly using media coverage, public relations, and political propaganda of calling asylum seekers a crisis and thereby implanting the idea to people that immigration should be more restricted (Fleay, 2018), along with the natural barrier–the body of water–they have made it easier for Australian immigration control, to exclude immigrants.

To sum up, whether the causes seem closer and more relevant to immigrants' daily lives, or seem like distant causes, most of the forces that help or deter immigrants from obtaining legality and citizenship boil down to political powers or motivations. Governments and immigration authorities use the media–be it social or mass–to suggest that immigrants are detrimental to their economy and society, and when the public is swayed by such messages, the authorities are then able to implement more anti-immigrant policies and get away from the watch of international governance.

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