

REVIEW;

"Nation of Strangers";

Through April 6. \$ 5; \$ 4 senior citizens; 16 and under free. Carter;

Library and Museum, 441 Freedom Parkway. 404-331-3942. THE VERDICT;

An illuminating chronicle of immigration as the story of America.;

When cultures converge;

'Nation of Strangers' comes together for the common good

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

February 18, 1997, Tuesday,, ALL EDITIONS

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 03C

Length: 426 words

Byline: Catherine Fox; VISUAL ARTS CRITIC

Body

As diverse a mosaic as **America** is, we share one thing: All of us, at some point in our family trees, **came** from somewhere else.

"**Nation of Strangers**" is one of three photo exhibitions devoted to the subject of **immigration**, and the one you should see first. While the others explore specific aspects of this phenomenon, "**Nation**" provides the sweeping --- historical, geographic and sociological ---perspective.

Here in 128 photographs is our **story**. We arrive on slave ships, ocean liners and homemade rafts, in end runs around border guards and, more recently, in planes. We bring our customs, costumes and cuisine along. We often are greeted with suspicion and scorn. We enter, with varying degrees of success and assimilation, the mainstream.

"**Nation**" **chronicles** this journey, giving it, as only photographs can, a gripping human face. Make that many faces. Some are well-known, like the mustached Albert Einstein wearing an Indian headdress. But most are your everyday Americans, from the sober Dutch women in their white winged hats at Ellis Island in 1910 to the Japanese-American children in their paper samurai headdresses at a 1987 Japanese street festival in Chicago.

As the wealth of images attest, immigrants and their lives have long been fertile territory for artists. They even engendered new genres. Lewis Hines took many of the "arrival pictures" here, which caught the new Americans literally just off the boat ---serious, fearful, proud, exotic and, as epitomized by the raggedy child clutching a coin in "Italian Girl at Ellis Island Finds Her First Penny" (1926), hopeful.

Commercial photographers found work making "property pictures." Copies of the 1873 image of a sober Norwegian family serving tea in front of their handsome Wisconsin home would likely have been sent back home to show off the family's prosperity.

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Life was not so rosy for every immigrant, especially those who weren't white. A poignant photo of a little girl sitting on duffel bags of family belongings awaiting "relocation" to a Japanese internment camp during the '40s is a reminder of a shameful chapter in American history.

While the exhibition explores the dissonance immigrants feel, caught between the old world and new, its ultimate message is that **America** is the sum of all these differences. From the Indian woman drawing a rangoli pattern on the sidewalk of her Brooklyn home to the bagpipe players standing at the entrance to a church in Queens, the kaleidoscope of difference is the source of this country's strength and richness.

Graphic

Photo: One generation to the next: This snapshot of two young girls on an outing with their grandfather was taken at a Japanese street festival. /

JAMES NEWBERRY / Chicago Historical Society

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Subject: **IMMIGRATION** (90%); PHOTOGRAPHY (89%); FAMILY (78%); ASIAN AMERICANS (77%); ARTS FESTIVALS & EXHIBITIONS (77%); VISUAL ARTISTS (77%); EXHIBITIONS (76%); HISTORY (76%); FESTIVALS (72%); PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES (72%); BORDER CONTROL (70%); WIND INSTRUMENTS (60%); EDITORIALS & OPINIONS (54%); **SENIOR CITIZENS** (50%); RELIGION (50%)

Industry: **MUSEUMS** & GALLERIES (77%); ARTISTS & PERFORMERS (77%); ARTS FESTIVALS & EXHIBITIONS (77%); VISUAL ARTISTS (77%); EXHIBITIONS (76%); MARINE VESSELS (75%); FESTIVALS (72%); PHOTOGRAPHY SERVICES (72%); WIND INSTRUMENTS (60%)

Geographic: NEW YORK, NY, USA (87%); UNITED STATES (96%)

Load-Date: February 19, 1997