

THE UNITED NATIONS OF NEW YORK. THE CENSUS FIGURES TELL A STORY, BUT NOT THE WHOLE ONE. HERE, IMMIGRANTS FROM 100 COUNTRIES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

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Byline: BY JANE RIDLEY REPORTING BY gINA sALAMONE, BELISA VRANICH, MICHELE HECK, MILA ANDRE, NICOLE LYN PESCE, CHRIS CULLEN, HALLEY BONDY, MICHELLE ICAHN, JEFF CRAIG AND ROBERT DOMINGUEZ

Body

Immigrants are arriving in America at a rate of one every 27 seconds, according to latest estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau. The number of foreigners who have settled in New York since 2000 exceeds half a million.

"The level of diversity is unprecedented," says Prof. Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, co-director of immigration studies at NYU. "It has never before happened that one city encompasses the globe."

In this special report, The News talks to people from 100 countries, revealing why they moved to New York and what they love about the city they now call home.

ECUADOR

Fabian Lliguin, 43, Manhattan

HAIR STYLIST

Came here in 1989, "out of curiosity."

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "Its multicultural tapestry, the best food in the world and the best-looking people representing every race on the planet."

AUSTRIA

Michael Gigl, 43, Park Slope,

Brooklyn

Director, Austrian

Tourist Office/N. America

Came here to work six years ago, after Los Angeles.

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WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "An early-morning bike ride in Prospect Park to get the day started; the diversity of the faces on an F train ride into Manhattan each morning; taking advantage of the incredible cultural opportunities."

TURKEY

Koray Duman, 30, Chelsea

ARCHITECT

Came **here** in 2004 to work after earning a master's degree in L.A.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It's very spontaneous. You run into people all the time, and you meet interesting people in unexpected places."

GUINEA

Marie-Helene Sanoussi, 26, Manhattan

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

Came **here** in 1990 when her father was appointed Guinea's UN ambassador.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "For the endless opportunities it offers to anyone who comes in search of a better life. I love the energy **New** Yorkers possess and how bluntly honest they can be."

AFGHANISTAN

Hamid-Abdul Nazary, 65, Queens

Elevator operator/maintenance

Came **here** in 1981 to have a better life for himself and his family.

Why I love **New York**: "People are so good in this **country**. I work in the Port Authority building [on 42nd St.] 23 years now. Many people **here** have helped me get this good job."

SLOVENIA

Emil Gaspari, 54, Westchester

SALESMAN

First came **here** 45 years ago; became a citizen in 1977.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "This is the most dynamic place in the world to trade. As long as you put forth the right amount of effort, you can accomplish whatever you want."

SWEDEN

Annika Sundvik, 40, Manhattan

Chef/Owner of Good World Bar & Grill

Came to **New York** in 1989 to study photography at the International Center of Photography

Why I love **New York**: "A certain sense of freedom in the workplace."

JAPAN

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Mizue Sawano, 65, Manhattan

Artist

"I came to **New York** in 1969 because it's the center of the art world, and it has given me the chance to improve and find myself."

Why I love **New York**: "It's an exciting city, and for me, as an artist, it was and still is a challenge."

INDIA

Neil Desai, 27, Newport, N.J.

ACCOUNTANCY

CONSULTANT

Came **here** eight years ago to go to college.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I love how you can always meet people from all over the world."

UKRAINE

Edward Rofman, 23, Queens

TECHNOLOGY

CONSULTANT

Family came **here** 17 years ago to escape religious persecution.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "No matter what time of the day it is, you can find something to do. And you can make as much of yourself as you want if you are willing to put in the effort."

CANADA

Kathleen Howe Garcia, aka Lady K Fever, 33, the Bronx

Professional muralist

and graffiti artist

Came **here** in 2001 and, according to this mother of two young girls, "fell in love with the Big Apple." She adds, "I officially moved **here** three years later to pursue my career as an artist because the city appreciates the arts and is such a competitively creative place."

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "There are opportunities **here** that don't exist anywhere else in the world. Anyone can come **here** and make it."

BURKINA FASO

Issa Yameogo, 43, upper West Side

NEWSPAPER WHOLESALER

Yameogo, who describes his homeland as "a very poor **country**, **one** of the poorest in the world," held a mundane job working for the government. Though that made him better off than most of his compatriots, he was determined

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to make a better life for himself in the U.S. After a long and difficult immigration process, he finally made it to **New York** two years ago.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The freedom. People are free **here**. And there are more business opportunities **here** than anywhere else."

CROATIA

Daniela Pavelic, 34, Queens

Travel consultant

Came **here** six years ago, working for Croatian National Tourist Office.

Why I love **New York**: "It is a city where everybody can find their own corner. -Everything is just a subway ride away."

MADAGASCAR

Aline Razafimampandra, 61,

Far Rockaway, Queens

French teacher

"I arrived in 1996 as a tourist because my sister offered me the trip for my 50th birthday. Then I won the immigration lottery and stayed."

Why I love **New York**: "I learned English at Cope Institute, acquired -computer skills at the YWCA and Bronx Community College. The icing on the cake was the professional empowerment I received at Dress for Success **New York**, and all of it was free."

SOUTH KOREA

Cheol Yu Kim, 38, Brooklyn

Artist

Came to **New York** in 1997 for more opportunities in the art world.

Why I love **New York**: "I can see almost every happening in the art world. That's why I can get good chances for exposure."

MACEDONIA

Tony Arapi, 30, Staten Island

HAIRDRESSER

Came **here** 11 years because "there was nothing for me in Macedonia."

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The energy is so ridiculous and crazy to the point that people don't care where you're from!"

BRAZIL

Guilherme Castellane, 21, Queens

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STUDENT/BARTENDER

Came here seven and a half years ago when his sister moved here for college.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "If you work hard, you can afford to go out and enjoy life."

CHILE

Denic Catalan , 42, Manhattan

Co-owner of Pomaire,

a Chilean restaurant

Came here for better job opportunities 16 years ago.

Why I love New York: Catalan appreciates that he can speak freely about political -issues here.

ETHIOPIA

Mehret Mandefro, 30, Harlem

PHYSICIAN AT MONTEFIORE

Came here in 1977 after fleeing a Communist takeover.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "Being able to find a place to dance any night of the week."

CAMBODIA

Ath Chan, late 30s, Brooklyn

MEDICAL TECHNICIAN

Came here in 1984 to reunite with her family, who arrived two years previously.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "I love how the -diverse ethnic groups make people feel right at home."

MALAYSIA

Zang Toi, 45, upper East Side

FASHION DESIGNER

Came here 24 years ago -after a year studying in Canada.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "I love just walking the streets of New York. I get some of my best ideas walking among all these people."

GRENADA

Natasha Burke, 33, Brooklyn

DIRECTOR OF -COMMUNITY AFFAIRS, LONG ISLAND COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Came here 26 years ago -after her mother and grandmother moved here.

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WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The possibilities are endless for anything you want to do **here**. I couldn't imagine living anywhere else."

SOUTH AFRICA

Anne Willner, 53,

Sheepshead Bay, Brooklyn

WORD PROCESSOR

Came **here** 27 years ago on vacation and ended up staying.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I love the freedom, and that there are so many different nationalities **here** that I've never come across."

TRINIDAD and -TOBAGO

Olston Cyril Watts, 37, -Bogota, N.J.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR, CONTINUUM HEALTH

Came **here** 20 years ago with his family, looking for a better life.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I can find Trinidadian food for lunch, or -Indian, or Italian or any -other kind. No matter what hours I work, I can find public transportation that is convenient. And I'm minutes away from Broadway shows and the -opera."

GERMANY

Sharyl M. Curry, 32,

upper West Side

PILATES INSTRUCTOR

Came **here** in 1995. She had an American father and American passport already, and wanted to study at the Alvin Ailey school for dance.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "You can meet great people from all walks of life. Everything is **here** right on your doorstep."

KAZAKHSTAN

Boris Shimonov, 51, Queens

SHOEMAKER

Came **here** eight years ago, after his daughter and sister made the switch.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "There's **not one** -single thing that I don't like about this city. From the people to the nonstop energy ... I'm very happy **here**."

VIETNAM

Eden Chieu Nguyen, 31,

Brooklyn

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DESIGNER

Came here eight years ago for a better life.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "It's an open-minded city that always accepts its own creative voices to push the envelope of new esthetic and design ideas into its culture."

JAMAICA

Ewan Clarke, 55, Brooklyn

BUS DRIVER

Came here 20 years ago to find a steady job after spending some time in England.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "You have the opportunity to better your life, go back to school, do whatever I didn't have the opportunity to do growing up in the West Indies."

FINLAND

Marjut Guigui, 35, Brooklyn

NURSE

Came here two years ago -after five years in London.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "It's a 24/7 city. There are a lot of opportunities. You can always find something to do."

GHANA

Elizabeth Okyere-Bour, 44, -Jersey City

NURSE

Came here 20 years ago because of the "unlimited amount of possibilities."

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "There's no better feeling than being able to work hard here and have all the city's resources at your disposal."

RUSSIAN

federation

Phillip Andriyevsky, 25, Brooklyn

TECHNOLOGY

CONSULTANT

Came here 16 years ago with his family.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "The night life and the girls! New York girls are some of the best dancers ever."

NEPAL

Biswa Thapa, 34, Brooklyn

JEWELRY/CLOTHING STORE OWNER

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Came here Sept. 13, 1998, after winning an annual lottery (out of 230 that year) in -Nepal to come to the U.S.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "The big buildings, the great roads. You can buy anything here. New York is like a small world."

ISRAEL

Menachem Borovski, 54,

Greenwich Village

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Came here 32 years ago to study at the Parsons School of Design after working as a flight attendant.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "This city is the closest thing you can think of nowadays as a contemporary, cultural hub."

GEORGIA

Dmitriy Shraybman, 43, Brooklyn

SYSTEMS EDITOR

Came here 13 years ago to escape a -civil war in Georgia (formerly part of the Soviet Union).

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "This city was my first -experience with another culture and another world entirely. It was almost a culture shock at first, but to me, it's the world's capital."

PANAMA

David Alaminer, 30, Brooklyn

PORTER

Came here 12 years ago to work at JFK Airport and live with his aunt in Queens.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "At first, it took time getting used to the cold weather, but I just love how this city has so many different nationalities."

GUATEMALA

Vernick Alvarez, 37, the Bronx

FASHION CONSULTANT

Came here 33 years ago with his family for a better life.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "The many opportunities on offer is amazing."

FRANCE

Smail Feroudj, 34, Queens

REAL ESTATE AGENT

Came here three years ago for the "challenge and adventure of coming to a new country."

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WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I love the nightlife and how active everyone is. I believe **New York** is a cosmopolitan city and we respect each other. It is easy to live **here** and fit in as an **immigrant**."

INDONESIA

Yunika Kadarusman, 29,

Melville, L.I.

FREELANCE WRITER

Came **here** 11 years ago for a better life.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It's a very exciting city. It's fast-paced and you always find something different."

PHILIPPINES

Steven-Tristan Young, 29,

Scarsdale, N.Y.

MARKETER

Came **here** three years ago to be closer to his family.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I love Rollerblading down the West Side Highway and holiday shopping."

MALI

Mamadou Djourthe, 21,

Manhattan

STUDENT

Came **here** five years ago to go to college.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I love the diversity and culture in the city."

KUWAIT

Saad Alayyoubi, 22, Manhattan

STUDENT

Came **here** five years ago for college.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The sheer density of ideas, people and events. It's a mini-universe bustling with energy and life."

UZBEKISTAN

Inna Sheyn, 28, Morristown, N.J.

ACCOUNTANT

Came **here** in 1993 because her parents "thought there would be more opportunities for my brother and I."

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WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "Even as a foreigner you still have a sense of belonging. And it's so upbeat all the time."

NIGERIA

Oladapo Atitebi, 17, Manhattan

STUDENT

Came **here** two months ago for college.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It's a 24-hour city, with reliable transportation."

ICELAND

Olafur Thordarson, 43,

Manhattan

ARTIST/ARCHITECT

Came **here** 23 years ago to go to architecture school.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The energy of the people. Plus, your friends always want to visit from back home."

MALTA

George Vella, 56, Queens

SALES MANAGER/german national tourist

office

Came **here** 19 years ago when his employers, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Malta, transferred him to **New York** to work for the Permanent Mission of Malta to the **United Nations**.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It is truly the capital of the world!"

MOLDOVA

Tamara Moraru, 48, Manhattan

DIRECTOR OF GLORIA ART FOUNDATION

Came **here** in 2001 for an improved life.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It is **one** of the most significant and magnificent -cultural and spiritual places - with the Metropolitan Museum of Art, Carnegie Hall and Central Public Library.

MEXICO

Oscar Reyes, 28, the Bronx

HAIR STYLIST

Came **here** two years ago to enjoy a better life.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The thing I look forward to most is meeting people from different nationalities. This city is the best place for that."

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COLOMBIA

Amparo Cordova, 49, the Bronx

HAIR STYLIST

Came here 17 years ago.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "The politics, the culture ... I just love the way of life here. You can get everything you can possibly think of if you work hard enough. I love being able to work with people from different nationalities and get some sense of their unique cultures. So I try to take something from each of them."

ARMENIA

Noune Sukiasian, 43, Queens

OFFICE MANAGER

Came here 22 years ago to raise a family.

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "I love Manhattan. It's a dynamic place."

DOMINICAN

REPUBLIC

Aylin Gonzalez, 24, Manhattan

business administration

Came to U.S. in 2006.

Why I love New York: "The cultural diversity. It's like living on all the continents at the same time, which can make one's life richer."

BANGLADESH

Rokeya Jamal, 42, Brooklyn

Esthetician/skin care

In the city 13 years.

Why I love New York: "The medical and health system in this city is better than anywhere else."

TAJIKISTAN

David Maveshev, 54,

Long Island

CEO of Nastel

Technologies, Inc.

Came here in 1980.

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Why I love **New York**: "This **country** gives **one** a freedom of choice, ability to succeed and achieve the set goals. I like the city's diverse, multicultural mosaic - freedom of preserving your own customs and exposure to other cultures."

SINGAPORE

Alfie Lee, 37, Brooklyn

Photographer and artist

Came **here** two years ago to pursue career.

Why I love **New York**: "It's perpetually on the cutting edge of creative expression and technology. The next big thing for the rest of the world probably happened last week in **New York** City!"

CYPRUS

Andreas C. Tselepos, 26, Queens

Actor-director

Came **here** in 2000. "I grew up always having in my mind that America was the place to make your dreams come true."

Why I love **New York**: "To me, coming from a very small and close society where everybody knows everyone, **New York** is the place to be myself. My self in a city which is the miniature of the world!"

CHAD

Souleymane Guengueng, 53, the Bronx

HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST

Came to **New York** City just months ago. The charismatic father of nine was unjustly imprisoned and tortured in his native **country** under the -brutal regime of former dictator Hissene Habre. He watched helplessly as hundreds of fellow political prisoners died from malaria, exhaustion, malnutrition and torture. When Habre was deposed in 1990, Guengueng risked his life hiding files containing names of the leader's henchmen before handing them over to -Human Rights Watch. He now leads the campaign by former prisoners to bring the exiled Habre to justice.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "I like very much seeing people from different cultures **here**. I love walking all over the city, looking at everything - and it is good exercise. I have learned the city now."

MONTENEGRO

Brian Hajdari, 39, Kew Gardens, Queens

BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT

The hard-working father of three came **here** with his wife, Altana, 18 years ago to escape harassment by the former Yugoslavian government. He remembers

police randomly stopping cars, demanding people join the

Communist Party. "If you didn't, you'd get harassed, beaten sometimes, jail - a lot of bad stuff," says Hajdari. "I got arrested while driving on the road, minding my own business. They just pull you out of the car."

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The people, the cars, the parks, the -movies. ... **New York** is the best place to be."

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CUBA

Ivan Acosta, 62, Manhattan

FILMMAKER, LATIN-JAZZ CONCERT PRODUCER

Acosta was a teen when he arrived in 1961 from Havana, but was considered a political exile after he and his -family escaped Fidel Castro's Communist regime. His love - and longing - for his -native land has always been reflected in his body of work as a playwright and filmmaker. The 1985 art-house movie "Amigos," which he wrote and directed, deals with the difficulties of Cuban refugees in the U.S.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "It has everything - culture, excitement - and you never get bored. It's always an amazing place. It's a city that even if you live **100** years, you won't be able to know the **whole** city. And I know it pretty well."

ITALY

Sergio Esposito, 38, Manhattan

RUNS ITALIAN WINE MERCHANTS,

EAST VILLAGE

Came to **New York** 30 years ago. If his parents hadn't been lucky enough to win an immigration lottery to the U.S. back in the 1970s, Esposito might **not** be the wine connoisseur he is -today. He lived cheek by jowl with his -extended family and, even though he was a child, his beloved Uncle Aldo would encourage him to toast the end of the day with a glass of Italian wine.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The city provides the world with an equal playing field where, regardless of your -history or background, if you are smart and motivated, you can be successful."

SYRIA

Ghazi Y. Khankan, 72,

Long Island

Board member of

the American -Muslim

Alliance

Moved to California in 1954, arrived in Manhattan in 1960, and has been living on Long Island since 1971.

Why I love **New York**: "The international atmosphere."

ZIMBABWE

Tichafa Tongogara, 35, Brooklyn

Filmmaker

Has been in the city for six years, having come for **here** for a college education.

Why I love **New York**: "The independent filmmaking scene **here** is really exciting for my career. I intend to go back home

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at some point to make films in my

home country, and I figure New York

is probably one of the best training grounds to be able to do that."

SOMALIA

Ayaan Ahmed, 34, Manhattan

MARKETING AND FUND-RAISING FOR SUNFLOWER CHILDREN, a charity founded by czech

model helena houdova

Lived in the city since 1990; after being schooled in England and Egypt, she came here to attend college.

Why I love New York: "The convenience that everything is open all the time. The corner deli, as a single girl, is great. New York calls you when you're from elsewhere. It's an inspiring place to make it"

HUNGARY

Attila Tihanyi, 30, Queens

Maitre d' at La Goulue

Came here seven years ago and worked in construction - 10 hours a day outside when temperatures were below freezing - while he learned

English watching closed-captioned TV.

Why I love New York: "In the past seven years, I was able to do many things that I would have never been able to do in Hungary. One of my biggest dreams in the near future is to open an Austrian-Hungarian restaurant."

SPAIN

Jose Antonio Rosello, 30, Queens

public relations at the tourist -office of spain

Came to New York in April 2006 because he

always dreamed about

living for a few years in New York.

Why I love New York: "The dynamism and energy of the city. The nightlife ... which is something coming from a Spaniard."

SLOVAKIA

Janette Parvakis, 33, Astoria

Bartender and

teacher in a -SlovakIAN school

Came here 1994 after Communism collapsed back home.

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Why I love **New York**: "Coffee to go, which in Slovakia they still don't have."

Czech Republic

Peter Bisek, 65, Long Island

Publisher of

Americke Listy, a

Czech newspaper

Came in 1965. "Czechoslovakia was **one** of the most orthodox Communist **countries**," he says. "They wanted me to join the Communist Party, so I refused, and before they came the second time, I was gone."

Why I love **New York**: "I have complete, real freedom to do as I please. I am quite happy that my children were born and raised **here**."

ALGERIA

Mehenni Zebentout, 43,

Manhattan

OWNER OF NOMAD RESTAURANT

Moved **here** in 1989 for better opportunities.

Why I love **New york**: "The diversity of people."

ARGENTINA

Marcelo Suarez-Orozco, 50, Brooklyn Heights

UNIVERSITY PROFESSOR

Arrived to study in the U.S. in 1977 and has lived in **New York** City with his family for two years.

Why I love **New York**: "The unique dynamism and ethos. It is unlike anywhere else in the world."

MOROCCO

Hicham Khiri, 29, Manhattan

Chef

Moved **here** eight years ago because there is more challenge in the food business.

Why I love **New York**: "The speed."

UNITED KINGDOM

Philip Riley, 42, Williamsburg

Artist

Came **here** 12 years ago

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"to show my work to U.S.

galleries."

Why I love **New York**: "It's all day and all night."

BELGIUM

Yves Jadot, 39, Manhattan

Restaurateur

"I came **here** because I had the opportunity to work in a restaurant in Bedford, N.Y., when I was 18 years old."

Why I love **New York**: "I like the fast pace and the challenge that running my restaurants gives me."

IRAN

Niloufar Gidfar, 46, Brooklyn

Pediatrician

In the city 19 years after leaving Iran in 1979 and attending medical school in Russia for eight years.

Why I love **New York**: "Just running into people from all walks of life."

ALBANIA

Gazmend Lita, 36,

Edgewater, N.J.

PROPRIETOR OF LE JARDIN RESTAURANT

Under cover of darkness, the ambitious father of two risked his life crossing the border into the former Yugoslavia to escape Communist Albania 17 years ago.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "You can come **here** with nothing, without knowing the language, but if you are determined, you will succeed. This is the land where your dreams can come true."

LATVIA

Roland Levin, 49, Manhattan

Real Estate Investment

Specialist AT PRUDENTIAL /DOUGLAS ELLIMAN

Came to NYC in 1974 as a refugee.

Why I love **New York**: "Its ability to make people better, more compassionate, to make them willing to come together in times of need, no matter of nationality and race."

MYANMAR

Linda Wu, 60, Flushing

CASHIER/MANAGER AT MINGALA BURMESE

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RESTAURANT

Arrived 20 years ago seeking more opportunities and to avoid the political problems in her native country, then known as Burma.

Why I love New York: "I feel very safe here."

NICARAGUA

Gerardo Somoza, 50,

Hell's Kitchen

CELEBRITY PHOTOGRAPHER

A member of the influential political dynasty in Nicaragua, he arrived to escape controversy and study arts and sciences at NYU in 1976, joining his widowed mother.

Why I love New York: "The excitement, the challenges. Here, you can achieve the top level of fame and fortune."

EGYPT

Talaat Abdelmonein, 46,

Long Island

Doctor AT L.I. COLLEGE HOSPITAL

Came here 10 years ago. "When I graduated from medical school, I was looking to enhance my skills, and this was the best place for that."

Why I love New York: "I love walking down the street around so many different people from all nationalities and not feeling like a stranger."

BULGARIA

Gergana Koleva, 28, Cobble Hill

FREELANCE JOURNALIST

Came here 51/2 years ago for the opportunity to pursue journalism in a country rich with ideas.

Why I love New York: "I like the energy of the city and the mix of cultures. It's easier to express your views than any other place in America. It's the sign of a progressive society - to be open to some irreverence."

lithuania

Darius Kasparaitis, 34,

upper East Side

DEFENSEMAN, New York Rangers

The effervescent tough guy, now a naturalized American citizen, has been in the U.S. for 14 years after emigrating to pursue his sports career. He came to the Big Apple to play at Madison Square Garden for the Rangers in 2002. Their being "one of the 'Original Six' hockey clubs in the NHL, I wanted to experience the honor to wear the Ranger sweater," he says.

THE UNITED NATIONS OF NEW YORK. THE CENSUS FIGURES TELL A STORY, BUT NOT THE WHOLE ONE. HERE, IMMIGRANTS FROM 100 COUNTRIES SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "The diversity makes it so special and unique. I can walk out of my building and have everything - the best restaurants and entertainment. It's the city with the most character!"

PORTUGAL

Jose Manuel Ornelos, 65, Manhattan

BUILDING SUPERINTENDENT

Ornelos and his wife, Maria Isabel, emigrated from the Portuguese island of Madeira nearly 40 years ago because of the economic policies of then-dictator Antonio Salazar, which neglected people in rural areas. Ornelos -quickly worked his way up the career ladder, first as a dishwasher, then a porter and subsequently became chief superintendent for a real estate management company.

WHY I LOVE **NEW YORK**: "America, especially **New York**, was the place everyone in Portugal wanted to go. They said the streets were paved with gold. They aren't, but they are paved with something better - opportunity."

EL SALVADOR

Jose Sura, 24, Brentwood, L.I.

SOCCER PLAYER

Came to the **country** in 1987 to reunite with his -mother and escape the war in El Salvador.

Why I love **New York**: "It is **one** of the biggest cities in the world. Within an hour, there are beaches, mountain ranges, anything you can think of."

ANTIGUA

Tyrone Carr, 43, Brooklyn

UNIVERSITY -ADMINISTRATOR

Moved **here** two years ago for work and to be near family.

Why I love **New York**: "Walk down Flatbush Ave., close your eyes, and with all the sounds and smells you might as well be on a Caribbean island."

CHINA

Kent Zhang, 44, Flushing

MANAGER, Buddha Bodai restaurant

Came **here** 14 years ago because he heard "it's very easy to make money in America."

Why I love **New York**: "At nighttime when you drive on the Manhattan Bridge or the Brooklyn Bridge, it's beautiful."

GUYANA

Nadira Hira, 26, Manhattan

WRITER

Came to America as a child because her widowed mom wanted the family to have a more stable existence. Moved to NYC in 2002.

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Why I love **New York**: "It's the only city where every single street has its own neighborhood."

TOGO

Rock Hoffer, 37, Brooklyn

MANAGER AT MANHATTAN FRUITIERS

Came seven years ago in search of opportunity, -after growing up watching movies and TV shows set **here**.

Why I love **New York**: "You can meet the **whole** world - every ethnic group is **here**."

SENEGAL

Meta Dia, 26, Brooklyn

WINE SELLER AND MUSICIAN

Came in 2002 to study the music scene and play in a reggae/soul band.

Why I love **New York**: "I've learned so much since I've been **here**. There are so many places to go and interesting people to meet."

NORWAY

Eirik Fluge, 35, midtown

Director of Cultural- Programs for the Norwegian Seamen's Church/Trygve Lie

Gallery

Arrived **here** four years ago looking for "work and adventure."

Why I love **New York**: "I like the energy. My favorite place is the Sheep Meadow in Central Park."

AZERBAIJAN

Vladimir Badalyan, 48,

-Fair Lawn, N.J.

INFORMATION -TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST

Arrived as a refugee 15 years ago, during a conflict in his native **country**, in search of a better life.

Why I love **New York**: "Everything is great about the city - a place where you can achieve anything."

POLAND

Agnieszka Stasiukiewicz, 34, Queens

HAIR STYLIST

"I came **here** a decade ago to join my father and other family members. He left Poland 16 years earlier because of the Communist regime there."

Why I love **New York**: "Central Park is a beautiful place for relaxation and Union Square is wonderful for meeting talented, artistic people."

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MONGOLIA

Batbayar Khulan, 35, the Bronx

Ph.D. STUDENT

Came here four and a half years ago to study at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine.

Why I love New York: "Brighton Beach. I studied Russian in high school, and going to Brighton Beach is my little trip to Russia. There are bookstores where I can buy Russian books, and -movies and great food, and it's not very -expensive."

THE NETHERLANDS

Victor Teixeira, 44,

-Lawrenceville, N.J.

APPLICATIONS

CONSULTANT

Arrived in 1994 after

falling in love with and marrying a

New Jersey woman.

Why I love New York: "It's the -greatest city in the world, with the exception of -Amsterdam, of course!"

BELIZE

Melecia Munroe, 28, Long Island

working on master's degree in human resources

"I came to the U.S. 10 years ago with my mother for better opportunities to come our way, financially as well as educational."

Why I love New York: "The wonderful energy and diversity along with opportunities that exist."

VENEZUELA

Meibell Contreras, 34, Harlem

Software Developer

Came here to work five years ago, riding the first dot-com wave.

Why I love New York: "You can go from Africa to China to India to France to Greece to Japan to Latin America just by taking the subway."

ZAMBIA

Christian Wijnberg, 51,

upper West Side

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FILMMAKER

Arrived in 1980 originally to work as a lawyer, at a time when Zambia was engulfed in war. "I came because everyone is a foreigner in New York and I knew I would fit in," he says.

Why I love New York: "It is a world city and 90% of my friends are from different countries."

HAITI

Farah Tanis, 34, Brooklyn

Executive Director, -Certified Social Worker and Family Therapist

Came here as a child with parents in 1982 because of the acceptance of diversity and educational and economic opportunities.

Why I love New York: "The variety in cultural expression and the enriching experiences one can have here in just one day."

RWANDA

Immaculee Iligabiza, 37, Manhattan

WRITER, PUBLIC SPEAKER, AID WORKER

The mother of two survived the 1994 Rwandan genocide that horrified the world. She hid with seven other women in a tiny bathroom for 91 days as her family was slaughtered. Remarkably, she emerged from the ordeal with a strong faith in God and has forgiven the killers. She arrived in New York in 1998 and her courageous story is told in her book "Left to Tell: Discovering God Amid the Rwandan -Holocaust."

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "No one ever makes you feel like a stranger. We are just like flowers of different colors."
"

AUSTRALIA

Lincoln Davies, 35, lower East Side

OWNER OF TUCK SHOP BAKERY

The outgoing entrepreneur came to New York City six years ago, originally for a two-week vacation. He ended up staying here and experimented with various wacky jobs - including a stint performing naked in "Puppetry of the Penis."

WHY I LOVE NEW YORK: "The relationship people have with the city - love and hate. The Gordon Gekko mentality vs. the foundations of the United Nations. There's no place like it in the galaxy."

IRELAND

Patricia Heslin, 42, Queens

Waitress

Came to New York in the early 1990s because employment was bad in Ireland and friends were coming.

Why I love New York: "The diversity and the money. The social life and the different nationalities."

THAILAND

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Sor Kornkasem, 35, Chelsea ARCHITECT

Came here 11 years ago to pursue a graduate degree at Columbia University. He landed a job out of school, liked it here, and decided to stay.

Why I love New York: "It's lively; the people, friends and opportunities."

Peru

Lucy Gonzales, 27,

upper West Side

House MANAGER

Came here to join her father 10 years ago, who received his U.S. residency five years earlier because he wanted to pursue the American dream.

Why I love New York: "It's a great place to expand your wings."

TUNISIA

Karim ben Salem, 33, Queens

Manager

Came here for fairness and equal opportunities.

WHY I LOVE New York: "Being able to live and work here."

TELL US YOUR STORY

If you're an immigrant from a -nation that is not featured in this issue, why not be in our next "United Nations of New York" special? Even if your native country is featured today, tell us your personal story.

We want to hear from you by Wednesday, Jan. 31. Send your name, address, age, daytime telephone number, country, photograph (if possible) and a brief outline of your story to:

Immigration Special,

Features Department, New York Daily News, 450 W. 33rd Street, New York, NY 10001. Or E-mail the information to

immigration@nydailynews.com.

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