

# Imagine All the People

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As we reflect on the celebration of Independence Day, it's almost instinctive to recall the many events throughout history that have shaped the United States. We remember the Revolutionary War – the very battle that planted the seed for an independent land. World War II, The Civil Rights Movement, and September 11th – events of equal magnitude – are among the many historical scenes that have etched their powerful images into our memories. But how many people, when gazing in awe at the fireworks or pledging their allegiance to the Flag, reflect on the importance of immigration in shaping our great nation?

No crusade, movement or war has left a greater mark on America's history than the huddled masses who have immigrated to the United States in search of "the Promised Land." The settling of America began with the belief that people – regardless of ethnicity– could live together and govern themselves by making laws for the common good.

## ***With that belief in mind, immigrants came.***

In 1620, 102 English colonists now referred to as the "Pilgrims," set sail on the Mayflower. They landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts, setting in motion planned European migration. In 1638, the Swedes began their migration to America with the goal of establishing a colony in Delaware. In 1655, the colony was lost to the Dutch. In the mid-1840s, a wave of Swedish migration began with the landing of a group of migrant farmers in New York. During the colonial era most of the immigrants to the U.S. came from Northern Europe. New arrivals came from several countries, but mostly from Germany and Ireland where crop failures caused many to leave their homelands. Groups also arrived from the Netherlands, Spain, Italy, the Scandinavian countries, and Eastern Europe.



In 1892, the Federal Government, recognizing the growing numbers of immigrants coming to America each year, made a monumental movement. They did not construct great walls or barricades to keep immigrants out. Instead, wishing to better accommodate their entry, they constructed Ellis Island in the New York Harbor and later erected the Statue of Liberty as a beacon of hope to the many entering that harbor.



On January 2, 1892, Annie Moore, a 15 year-old Irish girl entered history as the very first immigrant to be processed at Ellis Island. Over the next 62 years, more than 12 million people were to follow through this port of entry.

In all, during the greatest period of immigration from 1892 and 1954, nearly 16 million people immigrated to the U.S. Before that time, about 60,000 people came to America each year.

## ***Imagine all the people.***

They sought freedom, fortune, adventure, knowledge and culture. In turn, they left an unbelievable impression on our nation. Among them were: Presidents Woodrow Wilson, Theodore Roosevelt, Herbert Hoover and William Taft; Composers Antonius Dvorak, Israel Beilin, Gustav Mahler, Sergei Rachmaninoff and George Gershwin; Pioneering entertainer Walter Elias Disney; Nobel Prize Winner Albert Einstein; Actors Bob Hope, Charles Chaplin, Elizabeth Taylor, Michael J. Fox, and Sydney Poitier; and Athletes Sammy Sosa, Patrick Ewing and Greg Norman.

Today, immigration continues and so do the debates that accompany it. Nevertheless and notwithstanding, the United States of America is different, because we are the "Nation of Immigrants." So, while another Fourth of July holiday has past, let us continue to celebrate the actions of all our ancestors: the courageous soldiers who fought for our independence; the brave souls who sacrificed for our equal rights; the hardened hands of the immigrants who helped cultivate the land of the free.

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