

Law Day 2010: Law in the 21st Century

Emerging Challenges and Enduring Traditions

From our earliest history, millions of people immigrated to the United States seeking a better way of life. Whether for political or religious freedom or economic opportunity, they flocked to the New World. However, thousands were brought here involuntarily through the transatlantic slave trade.

Still others arrived as indentured servants having bought their passage with years of work at low or no wage. All contributed to make our nation what it is today.

Up until the late 19th century, new settlers were welcomed to come and share their talents and labor. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914,

American attitudes toward immigration began to shift. Nationalism and suspicion of foreigners were on the rise, and immigrants' loyalties were called into question. Soon laws were passed to try to limit the flow of immigrants - the Emergency Quota Act in 1921 and the Immigration Act of 1924. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 (Hart-Celler Act) abolished the national-origin quotas changing the ethnic make up of immigration. Still more people came; some legally others not.

A big issue currently facing the US in the 21st century concerning human migration is the law enforcement and humanitarian problem of the estimated 12 million illegal immigrants living and working here. The debate over immigration reform continues to challenge lawmakers.

◆ Human Migration ◆

*“...Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free, The wretched refuse of
your teeming shore. Send these, the
homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift
my lamp beside the golden door!”*

Partial inscription on the base of
The Statue of Liberty

Newspaper Activity:

- ◆ Look through editions of the newspaper for stories about groups of people who have moved. Did they move away from your community or to it to seek job opportunities or a fresh start? What struggles do they face with the move? Are there groups or organizations in place to help these people?

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Identify the group(s)	
Why did they move to the community?	Where did they move to away and why?
What challenges do they face?	
Where can they go for help?	