



WELCOMING OUR IMMIGRANT SISTERS AND BROTHERS



January 4, 2009
Feast of the Epiphany

“...there are no more distinctions between Jew and Greek, slave and free, male and female, but all of you are one in Christ Jesus.”

Galatians 3:28

Immigration in Minnesota

Minnesota’s immigration story begins during the early nineteenth century with the arrival of French and French Canadian explorers and fur traders. During the mid-1800s, the Bureau of Immigration issued and distributed pamphlets throughout Northern Europe advertising Minnesota’s industrial prospects, fertile soil and the availability of farm land. As a result, German, Belgian, Irish, Norwegian and Swedish immigrants journeyed to Minnesota.

In 1890, Minnesota immigration peaked, and 40 percent of the State’s population was foreign born. By the end of the nineteenth century, Minnesota’s election ballots were written in nine languages: Czech, English, Finnish, French, German, Italian, Norwegian, Polish and Swedish.

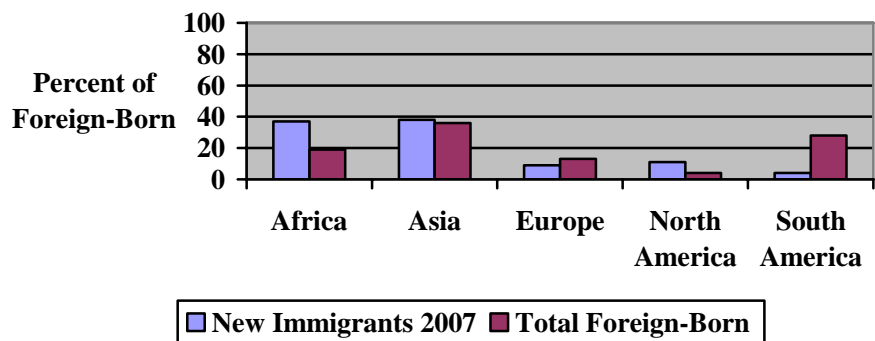
At the end of the nineteenth century, packing plants recruited workers from the Balkan countries. In 1907, the Minnesota Sugar Company built a processing plant in Chaska, and hired the first Mexican migrant farmers to work on beet farms in Albert Lea, Chaska and Savage.

During the early 1900s, educational opportunities at Minnesota colleges brought Filipino students to Minnesota. Nearly two decades later, recruiters hired Filipino laborers to work in the sugar beet fields and canneries during the spring and summer. Finnish and Slavic immigrants traveled to Minnesota to work in the mines, and by 1930 represented 53 percent of the Arrowhead region’s foreign-born population. Japanese immigrants first traveled to Minnesota during the 1950s in order to pursue educational opportunities, and also as a result of the involvement of re-settlement agencies.

Following the destruction of the Seoul National University campus during the Korean War, the University of Minnesota invited more than two-hundred Korean faculty members to Minnesota between 1954 and 1962. Fearing Communist regimes, Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, Lao and Cambodian refugees represented the largest number of immigrants to Minnesota from 1975 to 1981.

Today, our immigrant sisters and brothers represent 6.6 percent of Minnesota’s population. During 2007, 13,814 immigrants, representing 157 countries, moved to Minnesota.

Minnesota's Foreign-Born Population



Though new immigrants represent a smaller percentage of Minnesota's population than they did during the late 1800s, little has changed since the arrival of Minnesota's first immigrants. Not only do today's immigrants leave their homes for the same reasons that many of Minnesota's early immigrants did, but they also face many of the same challenges – from language barriers and discrimination to culture shock and isolation.

1890	TODAY
PUSH FACTORS	
<i>Reasons within a person's home country that cause him or her to leave</i>	
Increased population	Increased population
Industrial Revolution	Globalization
Changes in farming systems	Drought
Poverty	Poverty
Political inequality	Oppression
Persecution	Persecution
Family separation	Family separation
PULL FACTORS	
<i>Reasons that draw a person to a country</i>	
Social equality	Social equality
Availability of land	Availability of land
Jobs	Jobs
Higher wages	Higher wages
Family reunification	Family reunification

In welcoming newcomers, we are called to educate our community about important demographic changes occurring in both Minnesota and throughout the United States. We are also called to challenge prejudices that fuel anti-immigrant sentiment in our communities, and make our immigrant sisters and brothers feel like strangers.

MYTH	FACT
There are more immigrants in Minnesota today than there were one-hundred years ago.	In 1890, 40 percent of Minnesota's population was foreign born. Today, approximately 6 percent of Minnesota's total population is foreign-born.
Immigrants don't pay taxes.	Both documented and undocumented immigrants pay income, sales and/or property tax.
Immigrants come to Minnesota to take welfare.	Immigrants come to Minnesota to work and reunite with their families. Immigrant labor force participation is consistently higher than native-born, and immigrants comprise a higher percentage of Minnesota's labor force (12.6 percent) than they do the Minnesota population (6.1 percent). Only refugees, asylees, and some legal immigrants are eligible for public support programs. Those who are eligible are subject to program time limits. Undocumented immigrants are only eligible for assistance in emergency situations.
Immigrants take jobs and opportunity away from Minnesotans.	The largest wave of immigration to the United States since the early 1900s coincided with both the lowest national unemployment rate, and the fastest economic growth. Immigrant entrepreneurs create jobs for workers, and foreign-born students allow many graduate programs to thrive.