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The Immigration Conversation: Do We Have it All Wrong?

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The Immigration Conversation



Do We Have It All Wrong ?



EBOARD Spring 2021



Brought to you by OLAS

The Organization of Latin American Students at
La Salle University

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General reminder

Before we proceed, we want to remind everyone to please be respectful and remember that for some of us present, it's a privilege to discuss immigration in an intellectual manner. We also ask that you allow yourself to make the most of this conversation by keeping an open mind and maintaining a positive attitude.

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- “In a time of drastic change it is the learners who inherit the future. The learned usually find themselves equipped to live in a world that no longer exists.” – Eric Hoffer

Today's agenda

The purpose of this cafe is to question the general structure we apply to a conversation on immigration. This includes everything from the terminology we use on an everyday basis to the aspects of immigration we prioritize when discussing immigration policy. To best achieve this purpose, we've divided today's presentation into three parts:

- Acknowledging the conversation
- Analyzing the conversation
- Fixing the conversation





Acknowledging the conversation

What are some topics that typically come up during a conversation on immigration?

What are some of the stereotypes that we associate with immigrants?



Breakout Rooms



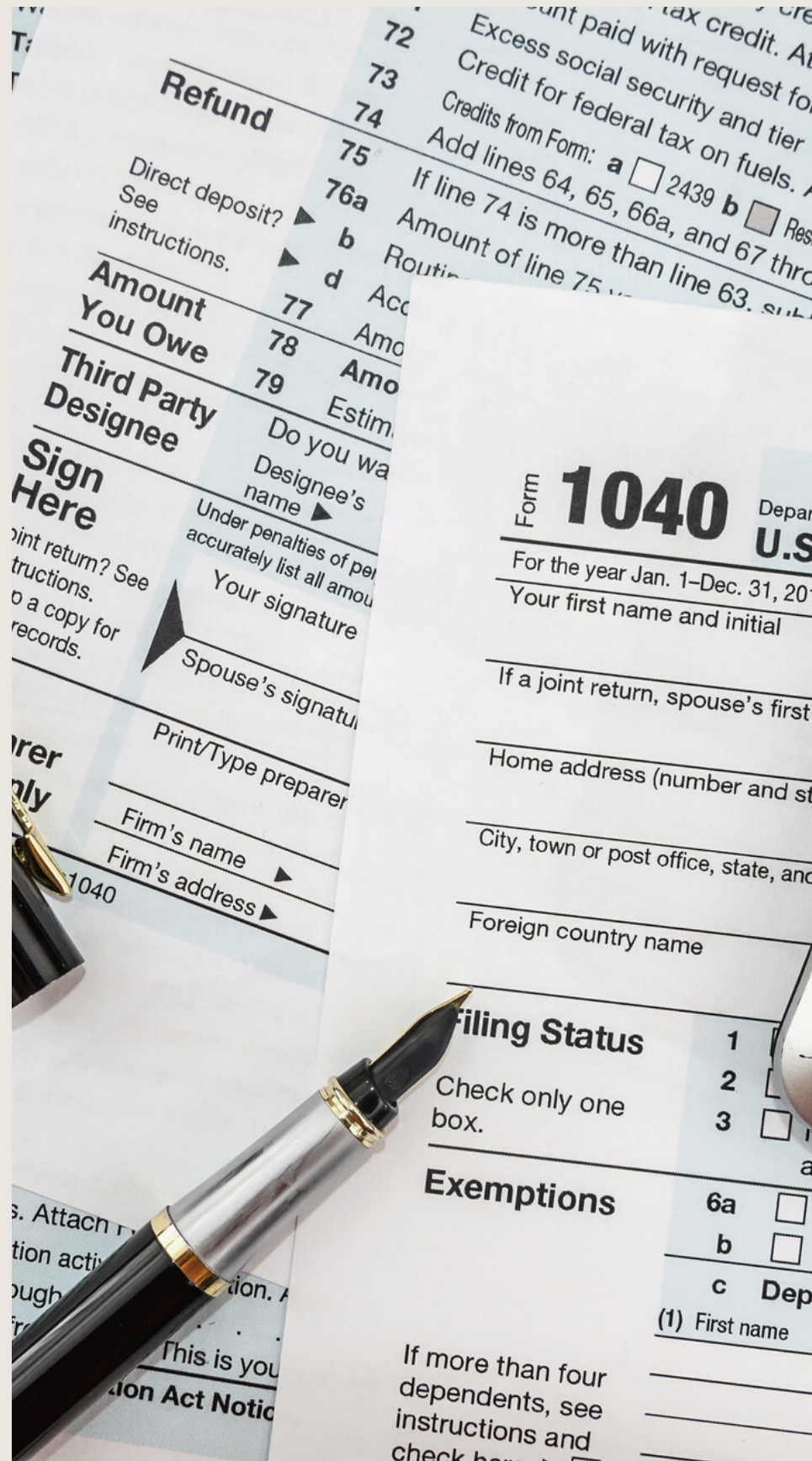


"No one leaves
home unless is the
mouth of a shark."

Warsan Shire

LET'S DISCUSS
TRUE OR FALSE





Immigrants collectively pay between \$90 and \$140 billion each year in taxes. Moreover, undocumented immigrants nationwide pay an estimated 8 percent of their income in state and local taxes (their effective state and local tax rate), which is higher than the effective tax rate of the top 1 percent of all taxpayers in the U.S. Everyone pays sales taxes on goods they purchase and property taxes on the homes they buy or rent, and more than half of all undocumented immigrant households file income tax returns using Individual Tax Identification Numbers.

Source: Anti-Defamation League



Consider the contributions of these famous immigrants: Albert Einstein, Madeline Albright, Joseph Pulitzer, Hakeem Olajuwon, Martina Navratilova, Irving Berlin, and Ang Lee among many others. Immigrants make up nearly 5% of all Armed Forces personnel and 7% of Navy personnel.

America's Advantage: Handbook on Immigration and Economic Growth, a recent Bush Institute report, reveals that immigrants are more likely than native-born workers to create jobs. They start businesses at nearly twice the rate of native-born Americans and are more likely to be self-employed. Their skills typically complement native-born workers' skills, seeking positions where there is a scarcity of native-born labor. This complementarity happens for immigrant workers at all skill levels.

Sources: Berkshire Immigrant Center
George W. Bush Institute



It is true that there are more immigrants living in the U.S. than ever before. However, the percentage of immigrants in the overall population is not much different than many other times throughout our history. Today immigrants make up approximately 13.5% of the total U.S. population. From 1900 to 1930, immigrants made up between 12% and 15% of the population, and similar spikes occurred in the 1850s and 1880s.

Source: Anti-Defamation League



While most first-generation immigrants may speak their first language at home, 35 percent of those age 5 or older speak English “very well” and 21 percent speak it “well,” according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Nearly 730,000 people became naturalized citizens during the 2015 fiscal year. They had to overcome such obstacles as traveling to the United States, finding a job, tackling language barriers, paying naturalization and lawyers’ fees, and dealing with an everchanging immigration bureaucracy. Immigrants must speak, read, write and understand the English language, not only for the naturalization application process but also so they can pass a 100-question civics test that has both oral and written components.

Source: Human Rights Watch Student Task Force



Refugees undergo more rigorous screenings than any other individuals the government allows in the United States. It remains an extremely lengthy and rigorous process, which includes multiple background checks; fingerprint tests; interviews; health screenings; and applications with multiple intelligence, law enforcement and security agencies. The average length of time it takes for the United Nations and the United States government to approve refugee status is 18 to 24 months.

Source: Anti-Defamation League

Analyzing the conversation

What terminology do we often hear in conversations regarding immigration?

Are immigration conversations at the academic level different?



Do the current conversations respect immigrant populations?

Did you notice anything else?



Breakout Rooms





"Everywhere
immigrants have
enriched and
strengthened the
fabric of American
life."

President John F. Kennedy."

Our own experiences on immigration

"I don't like the word 'Alien.'"

"Being called uneducated simply because we do not know all the English terms."

"When I first joined OLAS a few years ago, I was given a tiny lecture on how to protect ourselves from students that would go up to us during events or tabling with anti-immigrant comments. Specifically, comments that try to invalidate the trauma we feel from our experiences with facts and statistics on immigration. Like yeah sorry, you're upset that your family member was deported, but look at the facts and statistics."



Our own experiences on immigration

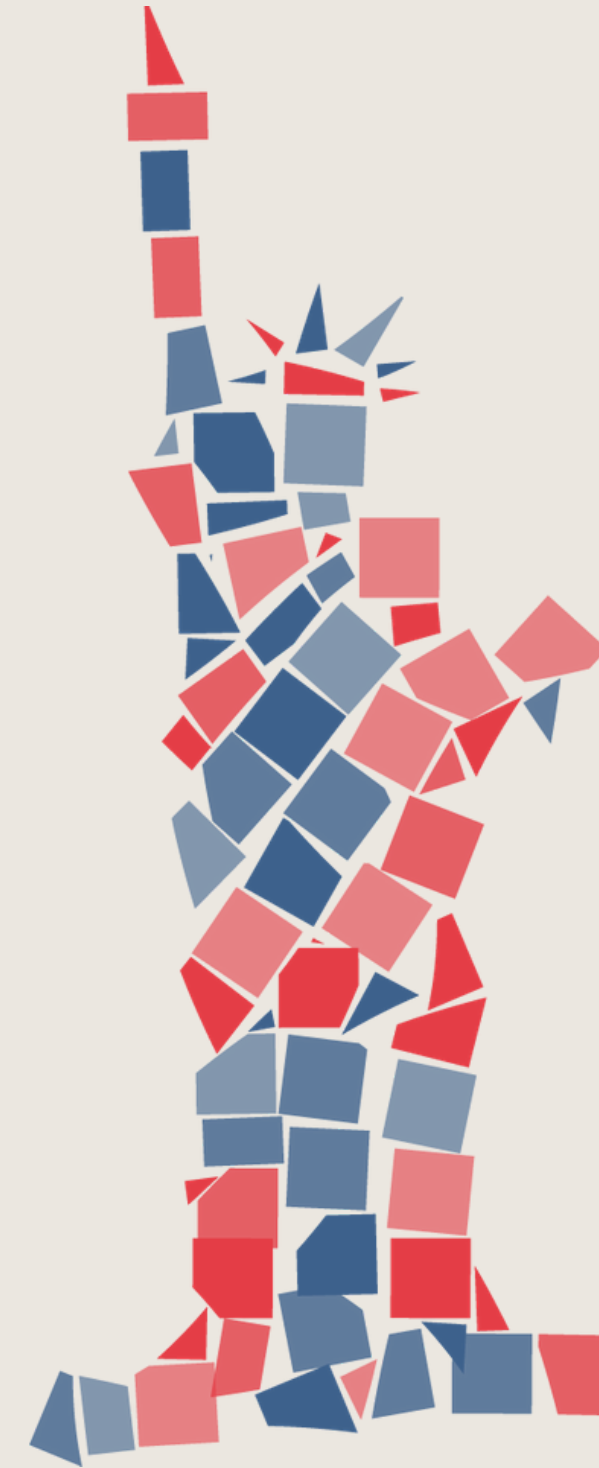
“The United States forcing my grandfather who is high risk to come to the United States during a global pandemic just to avoid losing his residency.”

“My mom had to use a fake social security number just to obtain her GED and later gain admission into the BUSCA Program at La Salle.”

“Having a misunderstanding with someone as a United States Citizen means you’ll likely lose a friend or have some gossip follow you. Having a misunderstanding as an immigrant in the United States means you will likely face deportation. That’s what happened to my Aunt when a woman called ICE on her just for talking to the woman’s significant other at a restaurant. My aunt worked as a waitress.”

“My dad was studying for the immigration test, only problem was the test was entirely in English. He didn’t understand the study guide provided. I saw him struggling with political words and I couldn’t even help him because I didn’t even recognize the words.”

"I now lived in a primarily rich white area in which it’s mainly Trump supporters, there was a town 'event' in which they had a parade portraying immigrants in different situations, wearing ripped up clothes, having signs on them consisting of racial slurs that I will not mention. They got to the point in which they had their own kids in cages with solely underwear 'representing' the kids at the border in cages. It was an experience that I will forever be reminded of, especially because all of those individuals were people I went to school with, and their parents, as well as the families of which my younger siblings now go to school with."



Our own experiences on immigration

"My grandmother and grandfather are both from Guatemala. My grandmother comes from a very large family, with 8 brothers and sisters. However, my great-grandfather was only able to take my grandma and one of her sisters to America, thus leaving my great-grandmother and the rest of her family behind in Guatemala. With such a large family it was very difficult to get everyone into the US in such a short time, therefore, my grandma didn't see her mother and other siblings and family for years."



Fixing the Conversation

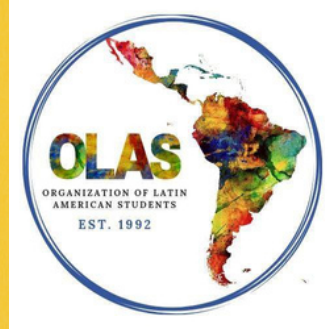
What does a proper immigration conversation look like in 2021?

What do we want to see from the current Biden administration?

What can we change immediately in order to have conversations on immigration that respect the population?

Does empathy have a place in academic conversations regarding immigration policy or strategy?

What can the La Salle community do?



THANK YOU



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