

## **Introduction**

Immigration is an issue that is not felt in the United States of America but in other industrialized countries as well. This has led to the rate of population growth in the United States of America since the population has been steadily increasing with the rate of people who continue migrating into the country. The main cause for the migration is in relation to search for a good life or referred to as the “the American Dream.” This has been a problem for the country for quite a while as keeping track of the citizens has been quite difficult. However, the government has been working on the problem for quite a long time and they decided on making some of the immigrants living in the United States of America legal citizens of the country. The Cruz’s immigrants are very close friends to our family and they are originally from Mexico. They migrated into the United States in 1910 and have been in residing in the country ever since. Therefore, this paper is going to look at the migration process of the Cruz family and the struggle they might have endured.

## **Background/History**

The Mexicans are known to be the largest number of immigrants in the United States of America. This is quite understandable considering that Mexico borders America and it might be quite easy to enter the country either legally or illegally. The main reason that the immigration takes place is in the search of jobs. The Cruz family, whose great grandparents were among the immigrants to migrate in the country in 1910, entered the country at a time when the Mexican revolution was taking place (Monroy 14). The search for jobs was in high demand at the moment and most of the Mexicans felt that the main way to secure a job was by migrating to America. At the beginning it was quite easy as the migration process was quite welcome by the American leaders but after a while the immigrants were not as welcome especially after the rate of jobs available decreased.

The American citizens were starting to get concerned with the immigrants taking over their jobs and this raised concern among various leaders as well. The war was slowly coming to an end then and the Mexican immigrants were starting to look for other jobs that did not revolve around the war (Portes and Bach 115). The main way to approach the situation was by targeting the immigrants that did not have the correct documents that had registered them under the American government. This way the number of immigrants in the country would be greatly reduced securing jobs for the American citizens.

The Cruz great grandparents had been working on the building of the railway and the roads when ‘the rule of law’ was introduced. They were lucky to have had the documents necessary and were not among the two million Mexicans that were deported in 1929 (Monroy 26). However, as much as they survived the deportation process, living in America as immigrants turned out to be quite difficult for the family.

## **Challenges Faced**

During the migration process most of the immigrants were forced to search for ways of transportation. This had been one of the biggest challenges faced by the Cruz family during the migration process since many people were trying to secure a place in the modes of transportation that were available (Massey and Reichert 475). According to the Cruz family, they were lucky to secure a place in one of the boats that were transporting the people. As much as this had appeared to be advantageous at the moment, the journey was not safe and the conditions were quite dangerous as well. The boats were overcrowded leading to uncomfortable travelling and this would have been an

easy way for the spread of diseases. Although the boat that the Cruz's were travelling in was not hit by an epidemic, there have been several cases on some of the other boats travelling during the same time. The main problems that they endured during the journey were the shortage of food and poor sanitary conditions. There had been several scares of contagious diseases during the journey but there were very few diseases reported that the people actually suffered from. Hunger was a constant problem during the journey and the sleeping conditions on the other hand were very bad due to the little space available. Privacy was not an option during the time and the fear of shipwreck was overwhelming. In general, the journey took them 14 days to finally cross the border.

Considering that the journey was made via a boat meant that the climate posed a great challenge especially if there was a storm. As much as a storm raised the risk of shipwreck it also increased the chances of people contracting different diseases due to the cold and the poor conditions they had. Enduring the journey was a great challenge as the risk of death was always high at all times.

### **Language Differences**

English is not the national language in Mexico and during that era the very few individuals understood English and this proved to be quite a problem. Lack of communication caused most people not to get the services that they wanted and this led to the delay of them being documented. Thus, it was very difficult to get assistance and this resulted to miscommunication at all times. The cultural differences were also quite evident and this was a big problem for the immigrants as cultural values played a big role in their lives at that time. Hence, if the name of an individual was difficult to pronounce, it would be changed immediately to an English name. The minor differences that appeared not to matter to the American people affected the immigrants as they were slowly being separated from their culture.

### **Means of Survival**

According to the Cruz family the main challenge faced by most immigrants that remained in America was lack of jobs. The fact that most of the Mexican immigrants were deported due to lack of work security in America made the rest of the remaining immigrants have a difficult time in securing a decent job. The work that was promised to some of the immigrants based on the construction of roads and railways was quite minimal as some of the citizens were determined to work there as well. Thus, the officials in charge of the allocation process favored the American citizens leaving the immigrants jobless (Zuniga and Hernandez-Leon 50). The discrimination was quite evident and lack of a common language made the situation worse for the immigrants.

In the event that some of the immigrants got any work, they were paid very low wages. This was attributed to the effect of racism, which was being practiced highly at the time and the Mexicans were being treated like the African Americans in the country as well. Gaining recognition as American citizens was very difficult and the immigrants struggled to gain any equal rights they could have mastered at the moment.

The living conditions were quite bad due to the overcrowding concept despite the fact that most of them had been deported. This was because the space allocated to them for living was very little and the numbers of the immigrants were growing with time since some of them continued crossing the border after the deportation process. They were forced to reside in tents and living conditions were very poor. Jose Cruz, who is the grandfather, says that those times were difficult despite the fact that

he was a child during the era, his father always reflected on the bad experience and this made him feel like he had experienced it as well.

During this time, Cruz could not get a job at the rail or road construction sites and he had to turn to odd jobs, which were equally difficult to find as well. This is because the competition for jobs was high as the Mexicans were not the only immigrants in the country looking for work and at the same time the American citizens were complaining due to scarcity of jobs. Surviving in the country was very difficult as there was the threat of war still being felt and automatically this would affect their livelihood in the society. The employees were quite tough on the immigrants and used the deportation threat if the immigrants tried to complain. Hence, they had to adhere to the conditions as it was their only means of survival.

## **Second Immigration**

However, the Second World War in 1942 led to the migration of the Mexican people. This was mainly because the American people felt that they would be very useful during this time. This was not fair treatment to the people of Mexico but since they were desperate to enjoy good living, they risked deportation for the second time and migrated into the country. The only difference made this time was that here was the introduction of the Braeco program (Durand, Massey and Malone 42). This was an agreement that allowed the immigrants to labor in the country but temporarily. It was quite obvious that this was not a fair agreement but the chance of better living appealed to the Mexican people and they were willing to work in America for a period of time. Some of them even hoped they would avoid deportation after their time in the country was over. In general, the second immigration made life even harder for the Mexicans that had been residing in the country. The living conditions were worse and the issue of scarcity of jobs kept arising from time to time.

## **American Requirements**

The American government at the time was looking for ways to deport the Mexican people as they had populated a part of their country. Complaints from the American citizens due to lack of jobs caught the attention of their leaders and this started the deportation process in 1929. The main requirements that the American government was looking for at the time were; documents that allowed them to work in the country. These were legal papers that showed that they were in the country legally either temporarily or permanently. There were some Mexican immigrants that had entered the country earlier and this helped them gain citizenship at an early stage (Portes and Bach 15). Although citizenship was important, the operation had been quite unfair since individuals who had been born in the country and deserved to get citizenship were also deported. Thus, the conditions were more or less the same for quite a long time until the new laws were implemented in the constitution that gave the Mexican immigrants rights.

## **Homeland Requirements**

The immigrants who decided to seek better living in the United States had citizenship in their homeland. The economic and political status in the country was however not stable and this made the citizens suffer. Travelling from the country to other stages did not require them to have any papers but rather means of payment.

## **Conclusion**

In general, the immigration process of the Cruz family happened at a very difficult time both politically and economically. However, due to the hardship that their great grandparents endured, they are able to enjoy peaceful existence in the United States of America. However, given time things changed and new laws were implemented that helped ease the existence of the Mexicans in the United States. In 1986, the acting President Reagan teamed up with the Democratic Congress pardoned more than three million undocumented Mexican immigrants living in the country (Durand, Massey and Malone 105). This allowed them to live in the country under the protection of the U.S government despite the fact that they were not document. This is a process that continued for quite a long time making the Mexican immigrants be more than 12 million in the country.

As much as this made their living easier, it did not deal with the discrimination process as they still depended on cheap labor. In 2006, most of the illegal Mexican immigrants and other nationalities stormed into the streets demanding better treatment and implementation of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (Jorge et al 249). This Act was meant to make sure that all the illegal Mexican immigrants residing in the U.S were granted citizenship.

Hence, the members of the Cruz family are now all citizens of the U.S and have enjoyed relative peace for quite a long time other than minor cases of discrimination. Cases of discrimination were quite evident as there was even the segregation process (Massey and Reichert 478). Where like the African Americans the Mexican immigrants had their own schools as well set apart from those of the White children. Therefore, most immigrants left heir countries in search for better livelihood and have had to struggle through life to gain the life they were searching for.