

## 11.947 Race, Immigration and Planning

Session 3 Lecture Notes:

J. Phillip Thompson  
Alethia Jones

US Census Profile of Foreign-Born:

- No mention is made of undocumented workers.
  - o The issue of estimating the number of undocumented workers is raised in the Suarez-Orozco piece, which estimates the number at 3 to 5 million.
  - o This is probably grossly underestimated as other estimates range as high as 13 to 15 million.
  - o All of these figures are based on estimates and assumptions. It is nearly impossible to get an accurate figure because undocumented workers have incentives for staying under the radar.
  - o Although some undocumented immigrants may be counted amongst the foreign-born in the Census (i.e. they were counted as foreign-born but did not specify that they were undocumented), the Census grossly underestimates the U.S. population, especially in cities.
    - Because many inner-city communities do not trust census takers and some are outright hostile toward them, many times the census-takers perform what is called a “curb-side count,” that is, they stand on the street, look at the buildings and estimate the number of people who live in those buildings. In immigrant communities, where people may be living in denser conditions than average, this counting method will yield grossly inaccurate results.
- Who are these undocumented immigrants?
  - o 50% of undocumented people living in the United States arrived legally and over-stayed their visas.
  - o A large proportion is Canadian.

Identifying/Tracking Undocumented Immigrants

- Prop 187 / Prop 200:
  - o Prop 187 was a proposal in California that, if passed, would require hospitals and schools to record and report anyone who was undocumented who used those services. Although it passed at the polls, it was struck down by the State Supreme Court, which ruled the Proposition unconstitutional. It spurred a major mobilization of the California Latino community
  - o Prop 200 was a similar proposal in Arizona that adjusted its language to avoid the pitfalls of Prop 187 and has passed at the polls.

- Who might be opposed to measures like Prop 187/200 besides the undocumented immigrants?
  - o Some employers (such as the Agricultural lobby)
  - o Members of the same ethnic groups and communities as the majority of undocumented workers because they will be targeted for questioning and increased scrutiny by law-enforcement.
    - Mexican-American, Asian American civic organizations are mobilizing to oppose these measures as threatened to civil liberties.

## Race and Immigration

- How do immigrants learn about race?
  - o Work settings after they arrive
  - o School settings after they arrive
  - o From people who have come before
  - o From neighbors, communities they settle in
  - o From movies and television before they come
- How does American racial history matter for immigrants?
  - o Immigrants need to understand the political dynamics of race
  - o Natives need to understand the political dynamics of immigrants' countries of origin
    - Many immigrant groups maintain political as well as familial ties to their countries of origin
    - In order to work with immigrants to build communities in America, native-borns need to understand those ties.
  - o Many immigrants are placed into the American racial hierarchy once they have arrived.
- Role of Narrative
  - o How do different groups learn about each other?
    - Many groups do not know their own history
    - Community narratives around community history tend to be fluid and shifting
    - By researching and learning about community histories, deeper connections and partnerships can be forged.
      - In the 1970s, university student organizations participated in meaningful cultural exchange: groups prepared readings about their own histories and read the selections prepared by the others.
  - o Why is it important?
    - Los Angeles, CA: Blacks and Latinos
      - After the mobilization around Prop 187, Latinos, both immigrant and native, were able to transform the politics of Los Angeles
      - African Americans saw themselves in competition with the Latinos, did not feel represented by them

- No coalitions built, communities do not understand each other
  - African Americans lost representatives
  - Last Latino mayoral candidate lost the election because he couldn't carry the African American vote.
- How do you plan in the context of unknowing?
    - What is the existing narrative of a community?
    - What is the narrative of the newcomers?
    - Is it necessary to construct a narrative or to construct a new narrative?