

BECOMING AMERICAN: A DEFENSE
OF IDENTITY AND IMMIGRATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the concept of becoming American—literally. First, the paper details the costs of building America and how our country has been built on the backs of slavery and the denying of equal treatment of various groups: such as Native Americans, blacks, women, and immigrants and refugees. Then, the paper turns to exploring the political controversy surrounding the issue of immigration in the United States before turning to what requirements are necessary for an immigrant or refugee to transition into becoming an American. Four such criteria exist: desire, gratitude, respect and civility, and legal standing. Lastly, the paper turns to a full defense of America being more accepting and open to immigrants and refugees starting with what a government's duties are to both groups, and how a consequentialist, deontologist, and Christian should respond to the issue of immigrants and refugees. Two objections are discussed in the later part of the essay before finally turning to a self—reflective question—what does the future of identity look like globally with the current refugee crisis challenging our notions of what constitutes a person's national identity

Thanks and Gratitude

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Glossary

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Delving into a discussion about American identity and immigration would be both premature and insufficient without a proper dialogue of how this identity came into fruition and how immigration looks over the scope of America's history in the first place. Often, when writing or discussing this very topic of American identity, I have noticed how people seem to always discuss the good—the immigration stories, the American dream, the climbing of social ladders and jumping of hurdles, without acknowledging the bad—the genocide, the discrimination, the inequality, the subjugation of human dignity. Whether the removing of such acknowledgment is intentional or not, these “bads” cannot be forgotten. In this particular section, I want to address some of the wrongs committed by the people who created America and hence the American identity that is so often discussed amongst the populace of this country. The wrongs I have in mind were committed against several groups of people, many of whom eventually became American and even make up our identity today. Specifically, these wrongs are best reflected in our country's treatment of Native Americans, blacks, women, immigrants from the late 1800s, and Hispanics and Muslims from today. One aspect to notice—almost every single ethnic and religious group in America has undergone tremendous scrutiny and discrimination. This discrimination and scrutiny make up the costs these people incurred in order to fully integrate into society. It also makes up the costs borne by this country to exist in the first place.

Before America's existence, an intelligent, diverse, and intricate group of Native Americans ruled the lands. The Indians lived in a semi-nomadic society that, despite its occasional warfare with neighboring tribes, found itself able to engage in trade and communication with other tribes. The Native American history can be divided up into three distinct periods: the Paleo-Indian Period, Archaic Period, and Formative Period.

The Paleo-Indian period of time is one in which the first Indian settlers first came to the Americas. This is believed to be no earlier than 13,000 years ago, although there is widespread disagreement from academics on the actual time frame of Indian arrival. Some believe it could indeed be earlier than the 13,000 estimate. Interestingly enough, this particular movement from the Asian land bridge constitutes the first ever North American immigration, proving that migration to North America is nothing new. The vast migration into North America would eventually break into many tribes with multiple cultures and identities.

Following the Paleo-Indian period is the Archaic Period. The Archaic period is the period of time when the massive migration of Indian peoples congregated into groups and spread out over the country into numerous segments and sub-segments. These tribes include, but are not limited to ones such as Creek, Cherokee, Choctaw, and many more. Like the Paleo-Indian period, there is confusion on when exactly this spreading took place, but several historians place the marker around 4,000-5,000 years ago. In the Archaic period, along with people breaking off into tribal segments, it can be seen that technology and socializing increases from the previous period. Specifically, tools begin to develop into harvesting more food like plants and fish. Moreover, socialization branched out from being solely familial to include socialization of large groups. With this socialization came trade, and the Archaic period serves as many historian's best guess as to when tribes began swapping materials with one another.

The last period, which existed when the first Europeans arrived is the Formative period. The formative period introduces us to the times in which Indians flourished as a people. This flourishing includes living in large settlements of thousands of people, developing agricultural and food-harvesting technology, and building and erecting grand architecture and sculptures. The formative years occur just before the arrival of Columbus and the Europeans, and scholars of

history estimate the years to of occurred around 3,000-5,000 years ago. The Formative period is more technological and strategic than the two previous periods. By this, I mean to say that during this time, specific names can be attributed to specific groups through the Americas. Indian scholars often use this third period as a way of managing which tribe is which. All in all, the U.S. Government recognizes 562 American Indian Tribes and Alaskan Natives (U.S. Department of the Interior, BIA.gov).

The progress made by tribes during the Formative period was made possible because of the increases put forth on the economic and political hierarchies of tribes. For example, trade routes and bartering extended to multiple tribes many miles away. Instead of being restricted on trading with the most immediate neighboring group, tribes could trade many miles away. Further, the emergence of chiefs begins to appear during this period. Groups become more structured and governing officials and rules are established with tribes, along with arbitrary borders.

Unfortunately for the Indians, their reign comes to an end with the emergence of the Europeans onto Native soil. Despite the common narrative often associated with Columbus—that he is an explorer who did incredible good, treated natives well, and changed the world for the better—that narrative has another side, one often marginalized and hidden from plain view, and this unspoken, hidden narrative helps to highlight the costs associated with the Indians in establishing America. One such example is the intention of why Columbus came to America in the first place. According to Howard Zinn, the late professor of political science at Boston University states that Columbus' people roamed the island “. . . looking for gold, taking women and children as slaves for sex and labor” (*A People History*, 4). There is one reason and one reason only for this type of mentality: control. Columbus and his men yearned to control the

people, the culture, the rules, and the land—at the expense of the Natives who had lived there for thousands of years.

One such account of the horrendous acts committed by Columbus and his crew comes from the personal testimony of an individual who traveled with the Spaniards. In his diary, which eventually became published, called *History of the Indies*, Bartolome de Las Casas, a young priest who wrote of what happened after Columbus left gives a written testimony of how badly the Indians were treated in book two of his work. Las Casas writes of how the Spaniards “rode the backs of Indians if they were in a hurry” (*History of the Indies*, Book Two), and that the Spaniards viewed the Indians as nothing more than objects. Further, the Spanish would routinely behead tens of dozens of Indians just to test the sharpness of their blades, giving no thought to the murder they just committed (*History of the Indies*, Book Two). The degrading of the Native people by Columbus and his men are not isolated events either. The atrocities committed in the name of Spain limits itself not to just the dozens the Spaniards would behead for fun on a daily basis, but instead existed on a national level—a level that eventually would nearly exterminate the Natives.

The Indians, as a whole, were taken as slaves, tortured, overworked, and depopulated. The fall of the Indians coincides with the fall of their land post-European intervention. The constant subjugation of the Native people to inhumane tactics proved to be too much. Las Casas writes of these horrid actions of slavery and subjugation eventually lead to:

Thus husbands and wives were together only once every eight or ten months and when they met they were so exhausted and depressed on both sides . . . they ceased to procreate. As for the newly born, they died early because their mothers, overworked and famished, had no milk to nurse them, and for this reason, while I was in Cuba, 7000 children died in three months. Some mothers even drowned their babies from sheer desperation. . . In this way, husbands died in the mines,

wives died at work, and children died from lack of milk . . . and in a short time this land which was so great, so powerful and fertile . . . was depopulated . . . My eyes have seen these acts so foreign to human nature, and now I tremble as I write (*History of the Indies*, Book II).

The mental image given by Las Casas is shocking and disturbing. With the Indians, we are given a picture of a complex, intricate society that was mutilated, mangled and murdered in order to make way for America. For the vast majority of these indigenous people, they never saw the great country we have now, they only experienced the costs to create it. Many Native Americans never experienced being an American, nor were they afforded the chance to do so. Although we have today some people who have ancestral roots to these tribes, and are fully American, they are the small exception rather than the giant norm. Columbus and the Europeans altered the very makeup that is the United States, and the slaughtering and enslavement of the Indians is just the beginning of the costs burdened to create America.

Exploitation and subjugation tactics were used on blacks as well as Native Americans. With the exception of the Native Americans, blacks are the most persecuted group in American history. This is due because of the longstanding persecution suffered by blacks in the form of slavery, withholding legal rights, and unequal treatment in today's day and age stemming from cyclical poverty as a result of this long-standing enslavement.

Blacks found themselves treated as filth, discarded as trash, and treated as less than subhuman. This treatment is most present in the example of slavery, where blacks were branded with the country who claimed them, and then brought to the country in ships, often packed tightly like sardines (*A People's History*, 28-29). This branding is indicative of the mindset of the slave traders and reveals how they viewed Africans—as property and mere means to an end. To put in perspective the number of blacks inflicted by slavery, the Public Broadcasting Service

(PBS) estimates that approximately 12.5 million slaves were shipped to America, whereas 10.7 million survived the sail over, and all were subjugated to horrendous treatment.

The gross treatment of blacks on these slave ships proved common for any sail master who wished to exert dominance over people deemed subhuman. Some ship masters prided themselves as “tight packers,” and would overfill boats with slaves. This tight packing lead to massive sickness, contamination, fatigue, weakness, and many slaves being thrown overboard, some still alive. Zinn writes of how horrible the experience from sea to land was for blacks. The spaces were not much bigger than coffins. Because of how closely chained together the slaves were, they all stayed in the dark, in their own excrement while the ship sailed violently at times. Moreover, because the deck stood at only eighteen inches, enslaved blacks could not turn around or on their side, they often sat crookedly, which drove many to insanity and a painful death (*A People's History*, 28-29). The imagery worsens, as one observer notes, the deck would often be filled with screams and bellows. At one time, the observer opened the door in response to the cries and witnessed what he related to a “slaughter house,” as the floors were filled with dead bodies and blood (*A People's History*, 29). Word of mouth about the intense travel by boat spread amongst prospective slaves in Africa. Out of fear, many slaves willingly jumped overboard and drowned themselves rather than experience the trials ahead of them on boat and in America (*A People's History*, 33). There is a longstanding rumor amongst scholars of this particular event in history that is interesting, yet horrifying. I believe it ties together the point I wish to make in regards to the horrendous treatment endured on slave cargo ships. According to these scholars, the causalities incurred from transporting slaves from Africa to America were so great and plentiful, that if one were to drain the oceans, a clear and large path in the form of a

bridge of bones from Africa to the United States would show. That image is haunting, and one in which we should be ashamed of as a nation.

Upon surviving the boat ride to America, blacks were free from the ship, but they could not escape the hatred and racism that ensnared blacks and America. According to Leonard Dinnerstein, Roger L. Nichols, and David M. Reimers, who published *Natives and Strangers*, an Oxford publication, the three authors state that hatred and racism of blacks began early upon their forced migration to America. These three authors write that this notion of black inferiority stemmed partially from the pre-sixteenth-century definition of black, which meant “soiled, dirty, foul, atrocious, horrible, [and] wicked” (*Natives* 12). The idea of black inferiority is not new, and stems back thousands of years when non-blacks believed that blacks were descendants of Cain, and therefore deserve treatment as someone who is despised by God. Eventually, whites began to see blacks as they saw Indians—sexual, lustful beings who were complete savages (*Natives* 12).

In viewing blacks as savages and animals, treating them as savages and animals followed suit in America. As tight slave ship packers existed, so, too, did tough slave masters exist, and their treatment of blacks are reminiscent of the Spaniards’ treatment of Native Americans. As Dinnerstein, Nichols, and Reimers note, one planter, named Colonel Lynch, “cut off the legs of a poor negro, and he kill[ed] several of them [blacks] every year by his barbarities” (*Natives*, 13). Intense violence such as this continued for years, and although blacks and white have gained ground in viewing each other as equals, even today there still exists perpetual disadvantages put on blacks by society in America.

These inequalities stem from delaying voting rights from blacks, and engendering the black populace in cyclical poverty arising from unfair circumstances of slavery. Post slavery,

rights for African Americans did not come fully into fruition. They were unable to vote free of interference until the 1960s. Further, there still exists major voting block to prevent access for them in the form of voter identification laws. Further, Many African Americans still live in tremendous poverty, much of which has to do with the inability to acquire enough resources to move up into the next class. The inability to acquire said resources has to do with the constant enslavement of the black populace for many years. In other words, since African Americans lived as slaves for such a long period of time, it allowed for other groups like whites to gather a monopoly on wealth and possessions, and despite the United States finally outlawing slavery, the conferment of rights did not equate with a conferment of money and wealth. As a result of this lack of material goods, African Americans started far behind their white brethren, and have often cycled through several generations, many of continue to live in poverty and are unable to move up the social ladder. The idea of failing to move up the social ladder is a point highlighted by groups other than just African-Americans.

One of these groups who struggled mightily under oppression are women. It is possible, since much of the explorers and writers of history are men, to forget of half our population. This invisibility, in a strange way, constitutes a form of double-oppression for women, as in addition to their invisibility in history, women were also severely oppressed by male-dominated society. For both women of color and white women of any status, the unequal treatment they endured played a critical role in women lacking sufficient resources to be free agent. In regards of women of color, their tribulations were quite harsh. Black women, for example, constituted one-third of all slaves brought over from the continent of Africa, and they gave birth in the same horrendous conditions of blood, guts, and infection (*A People's History*, 106). White women, although not servants, still faced special hardships in regards to pregnancy and life. Eighteen women came

over on the Mayflower, and only four survived upon arriving. The prevalent death that struck the women had to do with the high rate of infection post-birth. Speaking of pregnancy, women were subject to sexist laws that prohibited them to have children out of wedlock. The punishment for such crimes ranged from heavy fines to harsh public punishments such as whippings (*A People's History*, 108).

To explicate further the way in which women were viewed in early American history, look no further than what the father's position of the family was as expressed in *The Spectator*, an influential magazine during the time of colonization:

Nothing is more gratifying to the mind of man than power or dominion; and . . . as I am the father of a family . . . I am perpetually taken up in giving out orders, in prescribing duties, in hearing parties, in administering justice, and in distributing rewards and punishment . . . In short, sir, I look upon my family as a patriarchal sovereignty in which I am myself both king and priest (*A People's History*, 108).

The language from this quote encapsulates the mindset men carried of women at the time: they were kings, women were the servants, men ruled, women listened, men were carriers of justice and women were procurers of crime, and most of all; men were right, women were wrong. Although these wrongs took place in a society hundreds of years removed from us today, injustices against women are still commonplace today.

Inequalities for women permeated throughout future years in America. For starters, it was not until the 1920s that women gained the right to vote—an action seen as the very essence of what it means to be a citizen and at the heart of American identity. The lack of agency that existed in colonial times shows itself again to women—even in the twentieth century. Even in the twenty-first century, women still face tremendous hurdles financially. One such example of this deals with the wage-inequality that shows a clear disparity between men and women. One institute, the Institute for Women's Policy Research, states that women earn approximately 80

cents to every man's dollar. Unfortunately, this inequality is expected to continue for the immediate future. According to the American Association of University Women (AAUW), "women are expected to reach pay equity with men in 2059. But even that slow progress has stalled in recent years. If change continues at the slower rate seen since 2001, women will not reach pay equity with men until 2152." As this quote shows, the longstanding discrimination against women in this country is expected to continue for the considerable future—well over one-hundred years into it.

Even immigrants who arrived by choice experienced harsh legal and social discrimination by the United States. It is an understatement to say these groups of people were not thought of highly by other citizens. One such group that emulates these very sentiments are the Chinese, who suffered incredibly harsh political and social stigmas despite their hard work ethics and true desires to become Americans.

Many Chinese workers originally found themselves drawn to America for a better way of life and for pursuit of the American Dream. In order to see their dreams become a tangible reality, Chinese workers searched hard and long for jobs. Many struggled to find work, and the ones that did ended up taking jobs no one else wanted (sound familiar?) According to Tom Gjelten, author of *A Nation of Nations*, these jobs were often of the harshest variety, and of the Chinese workers who did find work, a foreigner's tax became required for all Chinese workers (82-83). The foreigner's tax required that all Chinese workers (and no other immigrants) had to pay a fine after each payout received. The singling out of the Chinese opened the floodgates for discrimination of not just the Chinese, but for all other immigrants who portrayed any characteristic deemed unwanted by the U.S. Government. For example, the 1876 Democratic Party platform stated how Chinese immigration had "exposed our brethren of the Pacific coast to

the incursions of a race not sprung from the same great parent stock [of the United States].” (*A Nation of Nations*, 82). Further, after the influx of Chinese immigrants into America, Congress began pursuing harsher immigration customs, such as the Exclusion Act (*A Nation of Nations*, 82-84). This Exclusion Act barred Chinese from entering the United States, but it also allowed for the government to make distinctions between “good” and “bad” immigrants.

The ethnic discrimination was faced by not only Asians, but by ethnic whites as well, especially those sailing over from Europe. Once the precedent of discrimination against incoming immigrants established itself as the norm for America, xenophobia seemed to become just another rite of passage for immigrants to suffer through in order to become American. Returning to the concept of “good” and “bad” immigrants, Congress devised this system after the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act as a way to legally discriminate and monitor who, exactly, landed on the shores of America. While the monitoring of borders is neither xenophobic or racist by its own practice, the way in which the government monitored immigrants is the problem. For example, look at how exactly the United States defined the words good and bad in reference to immigrants. The government views good immigrants as ones who spoke English, adapted to their ways of life, accepted Protestantism, and did not bring their culture into America. Bad immigrants were ones who carried traditions from their old ways of life into America (*A Nation of Nations*, 82). In other words, whoever tried to blend their native country with their new home, America. Moreover, this division of good and bad allowed for the country to believe false narratives about the influx of immigrants coming to America, such as the idea that bad immigrants were vastly outnumbering the good ones. The developing of xenophobic tendencies of the American people caused for the flourishing of the “Know-Nothing” party, a party who

preached a Nativist tone, rejected all non-Anglo immigrants, and vehemently rallied against any Catholic immigrants.

The anti-immigrant sentiments of the country began to challenge the notion of what it meant to be an American and what being an American stood for. Gjelten documents this internal struggle of American identity with a long, but necessary passage in his book:

The half century from 1875-1925 saw two major developments in the United States related to immigration. First was a big jump in the number of people coming into the country. Second was a head-on clash between opposing views of the U.S. identity, the clash that had been building since the early days of the Republic. On one side: those who believed America was defined by its openness, where anyone committed to the country's ideals could become an American. On the other: those who believed the United States was essentially a north European nation and should remain so. The first development reinforced the second; as more immigrants arrived, the question of the country's character became more pressing (82-83).

The identity conflict of the United States and the people who inhabit it have personal interest to me as an Italian and descendent of Italian great-great grandparents who were amongst the first to arrive and be exposed the same treatment written of here. My grandparents, like so many immigrants, retreated from their native Italy and Sicily due to economic hardship and the intermarriage between an Italian and a Sicilian Italian. While they believed they were escaping discrimination and unfair treatment, it just so happened they went from one hostile country to another—yet my grandparents kept hope and instilled this same hope into their offspring. This same hope came despite gross racial stereotyping of them as Italians. My late Grandma once told me that some of the first English words learned by my great-great grandparents were “wop” and “guido” because the two ethnic slurs were the first they heard upon landing in New York. I believe this story perfectly encapsulates what Gjelten writes of in his book: the identity conflict between the natives and the immigrants. More specifically, the concept of American Identity and

what America is. Whereas the citizens began abandoning all hope and preached despair, the immigrants accepted and believed in hope and the future America could offer them. These same sentiments are felt by the immigrants today—Muslims and Hispanics

The identity crisis Gjelten wrote of applies as much today as it did years ago in the 1800 and 1900s. Specifically, Muslims and Hispanics face more scrutiny than any other group in the United States. For Muslims and Hispanics, attacks on them based on their religion have occurred, immigration bans have been carried out, gross stereotypes have come into play, and their ability to matriculate into American society has been questioned.

Since 9/11, Muslims have faced enormous, and, often, unfounded persecution. Anti-Muslim sentiments have increased since Donald Trump announced and won his bid for President of the United States. For starters, upticks of violence against Muslims has become commonplace. According to Pew Research, anti-Muslim assaults reach 9/11-era levels, FBI data shows. There was an increase of 67% of anti-Muslim incidents in 2015. The violence includes vandalism, harassment, and even death. The violence hit a new low recently, as the first black female Muslim judge to sit on the highest court in New York was found floating in the Hudson river (AJC). Outside of the social sphere, the political climate views Muslims poorly, as the election of Donald J. Trump revealed. Upon his election, Trump enacted a nationwide “Muslim ban” from certain countries, sparking national outrage. The ban capitalizes on the idea that Muslims are incapable of coexistent in a democratic society with other citizens. These sentiments cast Muslims as the “bad immigrants” Gjelten writes of. Further, Pew Research backs up these sentiments, with a reported 49% of people believing at least some Muslims in the United States are anti-American and 11% believing “most or all” are anti-American.

Hispanics have endured similar treatment like their Muslim brethren and prior immigrants. LA Weekly found that an increase of anti-Latino hate increased from 69% in 2015 amid Trump's name calling of Mexicans in his address declaring his run for presidency. Like the Muslim Ban, Trump actively campaigned to build "the greatest wall we will ever see" as a remedy for the immigration viewed by Trump and his supporters as bad. Trump is also on record with saying:

When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best. They're not sending you. They're not sending you. They're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems with us. They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some, I assume, are good people (RealClearPolitics).

As this quote shows, the calling of Hispanics rapists and criminals, and claiming that Mexico is not sending us their best, implies further that Hispanic immigrants are, once again, bad immigrants.

The costs burdened by America for its existence are numerous and without comparison. As our treatment of Native Americans, blacks, women, and immigrants have shown, discrimination, subjugation, and dehumanization is as American as apple pie, and actions such as these are likely to continue in the future. With the discussion of costs out of the way, the paper will turn into exploring the political landscape of immigration. Specifically, how the country views immigration politically, and what some of the legal hurdles are in becoming a citizen. Like the costs, the process of becoming a citizen is not often talked of despite the issue of immigration being highly polarized and publicized. I want to explore this notion further in the next section.

On the political spectrum, immigration ranks high on people's list of important issues. Diverging theories of how a state should approach immigration include building walls to fostering new communities, with little to no middle-ground in between. Although immigrants and refugees are often talked about by the American People, their struggles and the struggles of approaching the issue of immigration are not discussed. Here, I want to discuss these struggles, and ask questions regarding immigrant, refugees, and immigration. Hopefully, understanding these plentiful reasons will assist in changing the minds and hearts of opponents of immigration. In this section, all of the people I reference, unless otherwise specified, comes from a seminar hosted by TCU earlier in the year that also explored these questions.

The first question that requires discussion involves borders. *What is a border?* To nations, a border signifies a political metaphor. There is a reason we call the border along Mexico and the U.S. "the border" rather than "a border." This political metaphor has a dual meaning. On one hand, the border makes two countries neighbors, yet the lines give clear divisions of who is who, and these lines, while simultaneously crafting us as neighbors, distinguishes us as "others." The idea of "othering" plays an especially large role for the immigrant and refugee, because it makes it easier for people in the United States to distance themselves from offering aid to these people who desperately need it. Next, *why do people even cross borders?* Garry Davis, a federal immigration attorney states that there are three main reasons why a person, whether it be a refugee or immigrant, crosses a border: opportunity, safety and peace, and for unification of a broken family.

Opportunity is the first reason. As a border is a division between nations, it also acts as a barrier to many families seeking better fortunes not available in their current country. The border, then, acts as a "rite of passage" for these families. In other words, it is the difference

from rag to riches, from inequity to opportunity, and from failure to success. David Noriega, a reporter for VICE News and winner of the French-American Foundation Immigration Journalism Award, claims “people come here for advancement wages.” To state it more clearly, people come to the United States to earn a wage that is worth more buying power than the wage they would earn in their country. Immigrants and refugees then send the money to their family back home. Safety and peace is reason number two. A border also can act as a safe-haven for people, especially immigrants and refugees, who are seeking refuge from persecution, unfair treatment, or from unjust governments. For several people, their only way to protect the lives of their future, themselves, and family, is to flee the country they have inhabited for generation. Finally, a large reason why people cross comes as a symptom of the first two reasons: unification for the family. The border also divides at the local level as well. This division hits families especially hard. For many people who seek refuge in the United States, many fathers stay behind as their families run to the United States. The reason for this is because countries like the United States tend to be more open and willing to accept people if they are women and children. Men are the “other” in this situation. They are viewed as potential threats, for Hispanics and Muslims, this is especially true, as they are often categorized as Trump and others say, as rapists, murderers, and terrorists who are antithetical to the American way of life.

What needs to be clarified here is this: Nobody desires to leave the home they have occupied for generations. People flee for necessity, not out of desire. Dr. David Sandell, a TCU professor of Anthropology states that the choice to leave home comes down to one decision: Do I want to feed my family, or not? With a choice such as this, is it even a question? Garry Davis echoes these sentiments with his experience as an immigration attorney. The people who come here prefer to leave home.

The second question that needs answering is what are the risks associated with crossing? Although people choose to cross the border, it should come as no surprise that even when people make the conscious effort to cross the border, if they choose to do so illegally, then they put themselves at enormous risk. Why would anyone cross illegally as opposed to legally though? The reason is if the immigrant or refugee flees for their lives, then staying anonymous is crucial to not just their survival, but to the survival of their families as well. If the immigrant or refugee is found to have fled, then cartels, governments, or other groups will persecute their family and friends as revenge. When crossing illegally is the only viable option available to immigrants and refugees in the United States, these people will enlist the help of shady groups to assist them in crossing, such as smugglers. Lavandera details this process, and states that it is incredibly expensive, often costing at least \$5000 to smuggle one family. For impoverished people who cannot afford this option, other avenues of payment may be taken, such as relinquishing everything they own back in Mexico to the smugglers, indulging in illegal activities, or even offering their own bodies for other physical or sexual work to ensure their children make it across. In addition, the smuggler's prices have been increasing as of late according to Lavandera. In Mexico, this is because the cartels have created a monopoly on the activities of smuggling, and now ask for a large portion of the money smugglers make sneaking others into America.

The discussion of cartels and criminals provides a segway into the third question. Mainly, if these immigrants and refugees are truly fleeing horror in their countries, why do these people not seek asylum to the United States for their special circumstances? People often view asylum as the answer to tough circumstances for immigrants and refugees, but as Davis details, using asylum as a legal defense is tough, and often times near impossible given the circumstances of a situation for people. Asylum is only granted if one meets one of the following three criteria:

danger, persecution, or torture. In other words, you can seek asylum is something, like a government or group, is attempting to force you to change a feature about you that you either cannot change, or should not change (i.e. religion), and while this may seem all encompassing, it is more often than not near impossible for the majority of people seeking to migrate to the United States.

To illustrate why asylum is inefficient, consider the example offered by Davis: what if gangs force you to sell drugs, and you want to escape to prevent harm from you and your family? According to Davis: this example *does not qualify* as grounds for asylum. In order to counter this and offer assistance to people fleeing, there exist two avenues available to argue for immigrants and refugees. First, a lawyer can argue for domestic violence as grounds for asylum. Second one can invoke family members: if a wife wants to run from her drug dealing husband, that would constitute grounds for asylum. However, it argument is not sufficient for providing asylum to all fleeing persons. Davis explains that this hypothetical works for wives, but not for husbands. This reflects the false mentality we share regarding male refugees and immigrants with perceived threats and constitutes an “othering” of people undeserving of the label.

On the subject of refugees and immigrants, question four asks, what are the numbers of people who flee their homes and how many are accepted? According to Krys Boyd, local host and reporter at KERA, approximately 65 million refugees in the world fled their homes last year. The U.S. accepted only 50,000 of these refugees. To put this in perspective, the United States, according to the International Monetary Fund World Economic report, accounts for 22.53% of the world GDP, yet the United States accepted only 0.0007692308 percent. Or, in more specific terms, the United States took on less than eight-tenths of a thousand of a percent of the worlds refugees despite accounting for nearly a fourth of the world economy. This shows the clear

disparity between our ability and our willingness to help and accept incoming immigrants and refugees.

In the beginning of this section, the countries sentiments on immigration were probed, and it needs to be probed further for the sixth point: How do people feel about immigration? For starters, the United States' unwillingness to assist immigrants reflects a popular tone within the confines of our country: immigration angers people. But are these sentiments justified? Lavandera thinks not. He questions "how can you have such cut and dry opinions about the borders when you've never been or experienced it yourself?" To explicate Lavandera's point and articulate how polarized the issue of immigration is in the United States, consider Lavandera's story from his youth. Just a few years ago, Lavandera used to go from El Paso to Juarez for lunch and tacos and be back within the U.S. border in ten minutes. Imagine trying that act today.

Another panelist confirmed Lavandera's sentiments on American's attitudes towards immigration. Sandell echoes Lavandera and asks from the perspective of the anthropologist "how much of our suspicions of other races come from illusions about said races in which we are illogically informed?" Further, these quotes by the two panelists bring into light that people's knowledge of immigration is incredibly limited. For example, Davis states that a large percentage of the illegal population did not come from Mexico, it came from the northern border—Canadians with visas. If security is our concern, we should fence the northern border as well, but this will not happen. Speaking of walls and fences, the implications of implementing a wall need to be discussed.

To gather a deeper sense of how we in America feel about immigration, look at who represents us. It is common knowledge that non-white persons will occupy a minority share if the

United States in the coming decades. For example, Gjelten reports that Latin and Asian Americans make up 22% of the U.S. population. Based on this number, what would one reasonably believe the makeup of the elected positions nationwide are? The answer is 2% (*A Nation of Nations*, 325). Consider the assessment given by Gjelten about minority political power at the state levels:

Eleven states were given an “F” grade by the group [New American Leaders Project] for not having a single Latino or Asian American state legislator. Virginia was one of eighteen states graded “D” for their immigrant representation. To reach parity with the immigrant share of their population, those eighteen states would need a six-fold increase in the combined number of Latino and Asian American state legislators. A separate study in 2010 found only ten Muslim state legislators in the entire country. The power of the foreign-born and their children had yet to be exercised and felt (326).

These numbers go to show that not only is immigration a huge hot button issue, but the people it affects the most, immigrants and refugees, have the least political power to protect themselves.

The issue of immigration brings up a pertinent, and seventh point. In regard to the U.S.-Mexico relation, what is at stake with a border wall? A border wall is symbolic. Like a border, it divides, but even more than a border, it causes further divisions, and sends the wrong message to our neighbors. Also, border walls cause huge logistical issues from a traveling perspective. For example, border checks can take up to four to five hours according to Lavandera.

Regarding border walls, Sandell states that such a wall is a symptom of larger problems in the United States: poverty, wage differentials, and a cracking U.S.-Mexico relationship. In

reference to the first point, poverty, Sandell states that a border wall is a symptom of larger problems in the United States: poverty, wage differentials, and a cracking U.S.-Mexico relationship. Wage differentials are a symptom of unfair wages south of the American border and in other countries such as Africa, Asia, and the Middle-East, where workers have little to no protection and work for pennies on the dollar. With America, low-skilled workers who become displaced by either immigration or do to economic factors outside of immigrant and refugee control often see immigrants and refugees as convenient scapegoats for larger social problems in the country. Finally, with the third point, Mexico and the U.S. work with intelligence officials. This particular relationship risks being tarnished if a wall is built. We should help Mexico be a better place to live, that would solve our security crisis and Mexico's internal issues, per Davis.

Finally, these questions about immigration and borders really centers around this question: can/are immigrants assimilate(ing)? The answer to this question is a resounding "yes." Noriega states that it is a myth that today's immigrants are not assimilating like in the past is, and that the myth false. This line of reasoning, as shown in the previous section, has been used for every generation as an attempt to exclude. Lavandera elaborates from personal experience: when he and members of his family lost their native tongue, Spanish, in one generation, it shows how quickly immigrants assimilate (This is especially telling considering his parents immigrated from Mexico). In short, the answer to whether or not immigrants can assimilate is "yes."

On March 22nd, 2017, the World Baseball Classic played its final game. The two featured countries were the United States and Puerto Rico. There are many important undertones to keep in mind about this event.

First, as Puerto Rico, a U.S. territory, decides in June to become a state, remain a commonwealth, or claim independence, all of its people glued themselves to the screen to see their country face what could possibly be their new country very soon.

Second, the starting pitcher for the U.S., Marcus Stroman, has a story fitting for the contest. Stroman is Puerto Rican, and his mother's side of the family hails from there. He originally pledged to pitch for the Puerto Rican team, but switched to pitch for team USA right before the World Baseball Classic started.

Consider the image. Stroman, a Puerto Rican, who is now American, will pitch against Puerto Rico, a country who soon could have a journey similar to his. Stroman, at only 5 feet and 8 inches, is only the 6th pitcher under 5' 10" to pitch at the MLB level in the 21st century. This past summer, he earned a bachelor's degree from Duke. He is a hard worker and the embodiment of the American Dream actualized. In a way, he will represent both Puerto Rico and the U.S. when he pitches tonight.

Only in America can one become not only a citizen of America, but American as well. Those who immigrate and come over can become, in the fullest and most real sense, as American as those who came on the Mayflower. This is not the case in other countries, where one can become a citizen of France, Japan, or Korea, but cannot become French, Japanese, or Korean. This transition into becoming American is what makes America great, and I have no doubt that it

will continue to work wonders for our great country--if only we allow it. America is great.

Baseball is too. Many watched the game that night, including those in our possible 51st state.

The issue of Americanization is nothing new, but in recent years, especially since 1965 and its reforms on immigration, this question has become more pressing. With more immigrants and refugees coming into America, and with more and more of them being non-white, the question of identity serves as the center of the issue. Must one assimilate and leave behind their culture? Must one blend the two? Can they live multiple or even different identities? I believe these questions are answered best through another scholar on the subject—Robert P. George. Robert P. George, a professor of Philosophy and Law at Princeton believes that these identity questions answer themselves in the heart of the uniqueness of what it means to be American and that no one needs to be reminded of what is unique in the United States. Whereas other countries bond themselves through blood, the United States common bond rests not in neither blood nor soil, but a shared moral-political creed: “We hold these truth to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (*Conscience and its Enemies*, 61-62).

George believes this quote is what allows people the opportunity to become American—and I agree. This Stroman example highlights exactly what it means to live out this quote in real time and to become American in the fullest sense—and offers a glimpse into the idea of states “becoming American,” but the question remains: How does one actually *become* American in the fullest and most real sense? In this particular section of the thesis, I will provide the groundwork for what is necessary in order for a person not born in the United States to become American. For discussing this process, I will provide four conditions that must exist in order to call oneself an American. These four conditions are as follows: desire, gratitude, respect and civility, and legal

standing. Upon completion and obtainment of these four conditions, one truly becomes American—and as American as those who came over on the Mayflower.

Many people have written about the transition to becoming American. Gjelten wrote of how “In theory, the decision to become a U.S. citizen separates migrants who want only to take advantage of economic opportunity from those who are ready to acquire a new national identity” (328). Others, like Robert P. George of Princeton, write that “people really can, in the richest and fullest possible sense, *become* American” (*Conscience and its Enemies*, 62). Clearly, the concept of becoming American is one we are familiar with, but have little detail about what, exactly, it is. And what is it? Certainly, there are factors associated with America that differ from other countries. In places like France, Greece, or China, one can become a *citizen* of these places, but one cannot *become* French, Greek, or Chinese in the sense that one can *become* American. This, I believe, is the chief difference in identity in America from other places in the world. Nowhere else in the world can one truly become another race or ethnicity, but they can become American here in America.

As said before, there are four unique features that one needs in order to become American. The first, desire, is exactly how it sounds: one must *want* to become a citizen and American. Desire serves as the first prerequisite to becoming American. The issue of desire brings up a fair objection. What if one does not want to be, or does not feel as though they are an American anymore? To this, I want to draw a clear distinction between identity and citizenship. The latter is something given by a state or country to the individual whereas the former is something that is crafted by the individual in accordance with the state or country. Here, it would seem as if the concept I am proposing with identity is that identity, or at least American identity, is fluid. While I am not opposed to the idea of this, it is not what I am directly stating, instead, I

am only saying the possibility of becoming American is available and afforded to all and everyone who wants it—whether the identity is made possible by fluidity, creed, or both is beside the point. Regardless, if desire is a necessity for identity, it would follow that a lack of desire is needed to remove said identity, and I believe this notion is right. In the same way one can become American, they can, too, *become un-American*.

Gratitude is characteristic number two. George writes that this particular trait is what allows them to become American (62). One must be thankful and understand the chance and life they have been given. An immigrant's feelings of gratitude to America for the liberty, security, and opportunity our nation affords him. This leads him to appreciate the economic, cultural, and civic life that is America, and leads them to literally become a part of it. Immigrants and refugees come here to start lives otherwise not possible in other countries. Must one *always* live in a debt of gratitude? No, they just must understand and be thankful for the chance they were given. One can be thankful for past chances while having anger about a lack of chances in the present or future, although many immigrants maintain this gratitude their whole lives. It is not uncommon to be perpetually gratuitous for what opportunities have been given to them.

Respect and civility act as the third factor in transforming into an American. An immigrant or refugee who hopes to become an American citizen ought to be civil and have respect for the laws and customs in place by the state. Any disobedience of the law must be done in fidelity of the law, not to spite it. But what if the law is heinous, or unjust? Again, an immigrant who is or is not a citizen can and should oppose horrible laws, they just must do so respectfully and civilly (a la MLK). Consider the following answer to the objection to highlight what I mean by the words “respect” and “civility.” Say immigration laws are immoral (i.e. no immigrants allowed over), a moral way to oppose such laws would be to enact change or support

people who are in positions of power to enact such change. A wrong way to go about it would be to kill border guards. Following the example, it makes sense then that there would be exceptions to breaking laws to get to America. If you or your family is fleeing certain persecution and or death, laws may be avoided if following said laws puts you or your family in certain danger. A law can be broken if it is to protect something as valuable as life.

Lastly, there is legal standing, which is quite the most difficult of the three. One should be recognized by the state as a full-fledged citizen of their new country. Notice the use of the word *should* rather than the word *must* here. Legal standing is an affirmation of the immigrant's newfound American identity, not creation. This allows for full circle in regard to identity. The state welcomes you as a member of their community. However, what if there is an oppressive state that will not allow for immigrants to become citizens (a la Trump)? This law is an unjust law and should be changed. The requirements set in place by legal standing reflects the state recognizing that the immigrant has met the requirement to become a citizen and is already American. These requirements include necessary paperwork and fines/taxes that need to be paid in order to achieve citizenship (as long as they are fair). From these examples, it follows that part of what it means in America to be fully assimilated in society is not just becoming an American citizen—but *becoming American*.

In his book, Robert P. George ended his discussion of immigration with a detailed account of his family's immigration story. I want to close out this chapter with mine. Years ago, two Italians made their way onto the shores of New York, and eventually settled in Providence Rhode Island. They came with only the money in their pockets and the wide-range of emotions in their stomachs. Upon landing, they attempted to make the most of their new destination, a place they hope to find home. Despite fleeing Italy for the economic and social turmoil, my

grandparents faced a new trial in America. Although the economic turmoil no longer persisted, gross mistreatment still found their way. Despite the discriminations they faced, they made their best effort to carve out a home. They finally found work, made a living and began to assimilate. Years later, a son was born, and eventually, this son graduated from high school—the first in our family history to do this. When arriving for their son’s graduation, my mother shook and kissed the hands of every teacher and administrator who helped her son finish the dream she and her husband started. “Stop,” her son said, “Mom, you’re acting like an immigrant.” Indeed, she was.

Chances are, my family’s immigration story reminded you of your own or of someone’s you know. The beautiful point about my family’s story is that experiences like these in America are not the exception—but the norm. The actualization of the American dream and the process of becoming American are available and afforded to all who want it, so long as we as a country allow it to be that way. Immigration has been great for America, and I believe it will continue to great for her. Being American means something important and is meaningful to each of her citizens. People like George and Gjelten have their versions of what America is, here is mine: *E pluribus unum*, out of many—one. This, to me, is the most beautiful feature of America. Despite all the differences in looks and personality, America still exists as one.

The next section to discuss is the ethics portion of the thesis. During this part, I will explore the issue of mass migration of immigrants and refugees in several parts: first, I will discuss the role and duty of states to refugees and immigrants, then I will defend assisting immigrants and refugees through the ethical frameworks of consequentialism, deontology, and through a religious ethic. Finally, I will explore two objections to not just this section, but to the entirety of my thesis. The first objection comes from Garrett Hardin's lifeboat ethic, or as it is better known, his case against helping the poor. Then, I want to critique and respond to an objection I hear from not just philosophers, but from the general public as well: do we not have a duty to our own citizens first more so than to potential citizens of the United States?

First, I want to turn attention to the duties of states to both refugees and immigrants, for ethics are not limited to just persons, but to the states in which persons make up and create. To stake my claim, I will invoke Michael Dummett to explicate the duties states have to both these sets of people. In this section, I will argue that states have both negative *and* positive duties towards immigrants and refugees, and these duties include assisting those wishing to cross over into another country to better their lives. First, a question: what is a refugee? The Geneva Convention of 1951 defines a refugee as "one who, having a 'well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality or, if stateless, that of his habitual residence, and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to return to it" (32). With a proper definition, the paper can now turn to discussing the way states should respond to refugees

According to Michael Dummett, professor emeritus of logic at Oxford, "Every human being has a right to refuge from persecution: to deny refuge to the persecuted is to deny them their due; it is manifest injustice" (*On Immigration and Refugees*, 32). Dummett claims that

states have both negative and positive duties towards humans. This idea of states having both negative and positive duties flies against conventional wisdom—which claims states have only negative duties to strangers. By negative duties, Dummett means duties we have that require inaction—such as choosing to *not kill*, whereas positive duties necessitate action, such as a duty to protect others from being killed.

Dummett believes, as do I, that the line of reasoning behind the thought that states solely have negative duties are false. The reason is that following this line of thinking requires collaboration of injustice by the state, since we would feel guilty actively killing strangers, but not feel guilty in allowing other states to kill the strangers. In the latter case, allowing other states to kill their people or people in general incurs at least partial responsibility for the death of those people by the state who did not act to see them not killed. Hence, those who flee their country because of fear of being raped, tortured, or killed, have a valid claim on other human beings to afford them refuge. However, usually only a state, not an individual, is in a position to afford these people refuge, which is why the duty falls upon the state in this instance to provide refugees a place to flee to. Dummett explains: It would be wrong to think that, while *individuals* have such a duty toward strangers, the *state* need concern itself with only its own citizens. The state is a representative of its nationals, and acts in their name; in a democratic society, it acts at their behest. It must therefore act collectively in accordance with the moral duty laid on its citizens as individuals. It follows that the claim for refuge of those who flee from persecution should be universally recognized (34-35). There is something deeply hypocritical about a nation—one who preaches the importance of life by telling its citizens to not kill, while simultaneously allowing other states to act contrary to the same rules put in place by its people.

However, one question remains: how can states around the world solve large refugee crises? Right now, there exists a large disparity in the world on who, exactly, accepts and helps resettle refugees. It is often thought that the nations best equipped to tackle the crisis by accepting large numbers of people (places like England, Canada, and the U.S.), are the ones who serve front and center of the crises. This could not be more mistaken. Dummett states this is false (36). He writes that “[t]he countries which have accepted refugees by the million have been the poorest ones: Pakistan, Ethiopia, the Sudan” (36). As the above quote shows, the reality is in contrary to the myth thought of by many. The most poor, vulnerable, and least equipped nations—who likely need assistance of their own from more developed nations, are the ones who overwhelmingly bear the burden of helping those in desperate need themselves. Whether this is because nations such as these three can relate to the pain and suffering endured by refugees, one factor is clear: developed nations, like the United States, complain when even a thousand refugees are accepted. The discriminate and unfair acceptance of refugee burdens by places like the United States cannot continue.

Dummett’s point about the poorest sustaining a hit from refugees brings up a good point. Remember when Garry Davis spoke of how asylum is often too restrictive? Well, Dummett writes of how the refugees who escaped to places like Sudan and other poor nations escaped because of starvation and civil war, two factors that, at the time, were not considered grounds for asylum under the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees. As Dummett and Davis illustrate, the definitions for what grounds asylum must always be revised and redone to keep up with the modern refugee crises (37).

One way to solve the state-refugee crisis is to establish a world tribunal, set up in part by the European Union (36). A tribunal helps to bring organization to a situation in migration crises

that tends to be filled with categorical uncertainty and disorganization. Also, allowing for the UN to control helps ensure a non-bias source to rule on matters of refugee acceptance. As shown throughout the course of this thesis, nations can, and do, deny people refuge because immigration is a hot-button issue and politicians would rather save face than save people. The application system guarantees that each state accepts and denies according only to their need and resources.

Another way a world tribunal helps is that it sets up an application based system to register and keep track of people fleeing from their country. Often, people who flee do so undocumented, and when families get separated, the chances of them ever being reunited are slim to none. An application system would allow for there to be trackers on people so families can be reunited if need be.

Third, a world tribunal allows for the refugee crises to be solved internationally—so that all states play their dutiful part. It is unfair and unjust that accepting refugees has become such a domesticated {wrong word?} issue. The majority of refugees being accepted come from a selected few—and often poor states. International issues must be solved internationally. It is the only way to ensure justice and fairness are being practiced.

Finally, a world tribunal would ensure that nations do not turn away refugees for political or for convenience reasons. As Dummett states, a state has a duty to accept or deny a refugee's application in accordance with the principles of justice, not for convenience (37). Next, the state's duties to immigrants will be discussed.

Like refugees, states, too, have both negative and positive obligations towards immigrants. Mainly, that those seeking a better life and for more opportunity have a right to

pursue such a destiny in the confines of their desired country (46, 47). In response to this, Dummett comes close to advocating for an open-borders idea of immigration, with the only caveat having to do with the country's ability to accept said immigrants (49). As for his explanation of state duties and immigrants, he states his thesis as follows: "Here is the foundation for every state's duty to those who are not its citizens: they are fellow human beings" (49).

Dummett says this quote because he takes issue with the "nationalist philosophy" that dominates many states and encourages politicians to vote in ways that benefit only their own country—even if this decision causes undesirable consequences for the rest of the world. Politicians feel inclined to take this stance because it is a safe one. A politician can claim to want to restrict immigration for the "better of the country" and still remain popular with the people. A politician has little to no inclination to advocate for the refugee, since they themselves are not citizens—they cannot vote, and since they themselves are poor, they cannot donate to them either. It leaves refugees in a catch-22. Like how a father cannot state that he has only duties to their family and not to the rest of society, a state cannot claim it has duties solely to its citizens. It also has these duties to all of society, including people who are not its own citizens. If one is to believe that their state has no duties to people other than its citizens, then it follows that states can kill anyone it so please so long as they are not citizens, and this makes for quite the twisted and undesirable worldly ethic.

A state does have duties towards protecting its citizens, however, there are limits (57). Dummett explains that states do, indeed, have special obligations towards their citizens and towards expressing freedom for their citizens. In other words, a state could, as Dummett claims, restrict the freedom of immigrants from entering the desired country, but the burden of proof

always rests on the party wanting to restrict liberty. Hence, the country wanting to restrict migration requires a compelling reason to do so, and the reasons of restricting based on pandering to certain misinformed political groups or for “the good of the country,” is an insufficient reason for restriction migration.

One reason a state is justified in restricting migration flows comes from what Dummett calls “submersion” (50). Submersion means a nation that collapses or becomes incapable of running effectively or efficiently to the point where it can no longer take care of not just the migrants who enter, but its own people as well (53). This often mimics the rhetoric used by politicians in defense of not accepting refugees. However, less countries can be affected by submersion than what politicians say. Dummett states that few, if any states can be affected by immigrants in the form of submersion. Usually submersion affects smaller states, ironically, one like Sudan, Ethiopia, or Pakistan. Due to smaller countries being at larger risk of submersion, Dummett states “[t]he conclusion is that small countries have a better right to control immigration than large ones, weak countries than powerful ones” (52).

Following Dummett, I want to turn the discussion more generally towards ethics and what individuals and governments should do regarding assistance towards immigrants and refugees. More specifically, I want to explore the issue of immigrants and refugees from a consequentialist perspective. In this section, I will explore what consequentialism is, and defend the assisting displaced persons using Peter Singer’s drowning child analogy with one addition: we have not only negative obligations towards the hypothetical drowning child (saving them from drowning), but positive ones as well (ensuring one cannot drown). These obligations are not rights based, but rule based, in which more pleasure and overall utility is derived from preventing drowning in the first place.

What is consequentialism? Consequentialism is a prescriptive, normative ethic. For consequentialists, good results are primary. A good way to remember this ethic is with their “bumper sticker phrase:” The ends justify the means. The branch of consequentialism we want to discuss here is utilitarianism.

The distinctive features of utilitarianism are as follows: utilitarianism is objectivist, meaning it is a moral science. In other words, whether a judgement is right or wrong is not up to us collectively. It is secular—nature, not religion serves as the focal point. There is no mention of anything supernatural. All we need for a view is down here. It is rule based, not character based. The principle of utility is the one and only rule. It is a consequentialist ethic. The moral character of anything is determined by the results it produces. Utilitarianism is hedonistic, meaning pain and pleasure are the only intrinsic goods and bads. It is the view that pleasure is the only intrinsic good in itself. Pleasure equals happiness, and is therefore the only moral good one ought to seek. Finally, it is aggregative, as in more is better, and judging based on quantity makes this ethic mathematical. With these features in mind, the focus can turn towards how consequentialist should respond to the issue of immigration and refugees.

In “Famine, Affluence, and Morality,” Peter Singer states that there is tremendous suffering in the world, and we can prevent it, quite easily, with little to no sacrifice of our daily lives or routines. Although this argument is typically used to defend charitable giving, I want to expand and explore further this argument by Singer. In essence, I want to extend this argument to not just the severe poor, but to the severe poor who aim to find new refuge in foreign countries. The argument I will posit from a utilitarian perspective is this: if one is committed to Singer’s reasoning, one must also be committed to doing more to help displaced persons and immigrants. The argument I want to posit is Singer’s drowning child analogy, and it is as follows:

P1: Suffering is bad

P2: If it is in your power to prevent something bad from happening without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance, you ought to do it

P3: In most cases, it is in your power to prevent that suffering without sacrificing anything of comparable moral importance

C: We ought to prevent suffering

Premise one is an empirical notion and taken as accepted. Singer says of premise 2 “I mean without causing anything else comparably bad to happen, or doing something that is wrong in itself, or failing to promote some moral good, comparable in significance to the bad thing we can prevent” (3).

This is where I will come in to argue later in the thesis. If we can only prevent bad by promoting some sort of good, i.e. offering refuge, accepting more refugees, or putting more resources into relocations efforts, then we should do this, especially if doing this good helps in preventing the bad. Singer says something about not acting to prevent this evil that is noteworthy. “Because giving money is regarded as an act of charity, it is not thought that here is anything wrong with not giving.” In other words, Singer says that our society has the mindset that the charitable giver should be praised, but the person who does not give to charity should not be condemned. In response, he states, “This way of looking at the matter cannot be satisfied.” It is not, as philosophers and theologians often state, “supererogatory,” meaning an act that would be good to do, but not wrong not to do.

So, why must individuals give? There are several reasons for this. First, suffering is bad. Second, the sum of individuals reflects the priorities of their governments. Governments will not increase their aid if people do not increase their private donations. Asking for the government to solely provide aid is unlikely—the government reflects the will of the people, and if we cannot change what we prioritize, our government will not either. Remember how politicians

use the excuse of “America’s best interest” to avoid assisting refugees and immigrants? Well, if private individuals make it private donations, it will be inevitable that assisting the refugees and immigrants around the world would be in Americas best interest. The total utility at stake falls in accordance with giving more. Consider the issue of aggregate utility with this question: What does the refugee/immigrant risk losing versus the average American citizen?

Like individuals, the U.S. must give also. This is where I will add to Singer’s argument: that not only do we have an obligation to prevent suffering, but we have an obligation to allow flourishing to some extent, and while individuals can prevent suffering, governments are best equipped to allow flourishing. Since the identity portion of the paper defended the notion that anyone can become American, and since America’s roots are engrained in, and flourished because of immigration, we as a country especially have an obligation towards the immigrants and refugees of the world. The problem with Singer’s argument as it currently stands is this: the best way to prevent suffering is to ensure it does not occur at all, and to do that, one must remove the conditions that exist for suffering to occur for refugees and immigrants.

The conditions that exists which allow suffering to continue include displacement of persons without access to homes, lack of food and water, lack of a country, lack of income, lack of an identity. With having no access to a home, it is all but assured that the people cannot situate themselves, settle down and find work, or safeguard themselves from external threats such as natural disasters. Next, food and water is obvious, we need food and water to live and survive. Lack of a country is an issue as well, as a country provides resources for people who lack these essentials, and ensures their people minimal safety from war, and terror both domestic and international. Without a proper income flow, people will be forced into cyclical poverty, ensuring they cannot and never will be able to buy necessities without governmental aid that

their future children will be unable to do the same. Finally, a lack of identity and a lack of self of who one is causes existential a unique existential crisis for people. Immigrants and refugees are especially vulnerable to this, as they are either not welcome, or unable to flourish in their native state. It is often said that a person is a citizen if they contribute to the well-being of the country, but as immigrants and especially refugees lack essentials, they cannot contribute to their country in a positive way, and often bear the unwarranted negative attitudes towards them.

The way to fix these lack of needs is for governments to provide certain goods for immigrants and refugees that would ensure they suffer less. Here is what should be done on behalf of governments. Provide refugees with asylum (once what qualifies for asylum has been expanded) and provide immigrants with a reasonable path towards citizenship that is accessible. This would give these people a country and provide the opportunity for a home in the United States. Grant them work visas and assist them in finding housing, then the process of “becoming American” can begin. Then, once settled, immigrants and refugees can find work and earn a steady income, and therefore provide for essentials like food and water. I know this sounds like a quick way to dissolve the troubles, and certainly by no means am I meaning for this to sound easy. I understand the troubles that would face governments in providing for people. This is meant to offer some suggestion. The United States gets angry when even 1% of its GDP goes to foreign aid. Although what I have detailed here seems lofty, it can certainly be done is {“if”?} the United States and its citizens decided it should be done.

I believe Singer’s premise (and my addition to it) makes a clear obligation for followers of the consequentialist philosophy to act. The total suffering would be lowered dramatically if individuals and the government acted more seriously towards the issue of immigrants and refugees. Even if people in the United States were to become angry or have harsh feelings

towards the influx of people coming into the country, the anger contrived by the U.S. citizens in response to these immigrants and refugees gets trumped by the tragedies facing the immigrants and refugees. Next, how followers of deontological theory should act in response to immigration and refugees will be discussed.

I want to ask this question during this portion of the thesis: how is a deontologist to act on the issue of immigration and refugees? In this section, I will explore what deontology is, and using Immanuel Kant, defend the notion of assisting immigrants and refugees through Kant's fourth example: failure to render aid. Following this explication, I will invoke John Rawls' *Law of Peoples* as an example of what we should do as a response to displaced persons and broken societies.

What is deontology? Deontology deals with general ideas, not consequences. Ethics is not just about producing the best results. It is more about moral principles that direct and constrain us. Dignity is a key feature: never treat individuals merely as a means. Further, persons are endowed with a dignity beyond price. In other words, dignity trumps price. This obligates us to treat one in certain ways and refrain from certain behaviors. Obligations put constraints on happiness. So, we ought to do things even if they produce less happiness. A person is not treated like mere objects. So, when we get mad at a soda machine, we kick it, but cannot kick a person when we get mad at them.

Also, obligations trump both individuals and collective happiness. We must fulfill certain obligations even if our happiness or total aggregate happiness is diminished. A key feature of deontology is the categorical imperative. By imperative, it means giving orders or commands, and by categorical, it means unconditional—moral imperative to or not do x is not conditional

upon x bringing anything about. The categorical imperative is a principle of reason, a fundamental principle of rationality. which commits us to the moral imperative. Another feature of deontology, autonomy is important. By this, Kant means an autonomy of the will. Autonomy is why we are subject to moral evaluation. This ethical view is prescriptive and not relativism. It tells us there are things we ought to do and not ought to do, and is an objective view of ethics. So, morality is as much a function of rationality as mathematics. Finally, actions are right prior to being good. Right is more fundamental than goodness. A good will is one that acts in accordance to rightness and this is intrinsic.

One might be asking, what does this have to with immigrants and refugees? Well, a lot. Kant lays out a short, but important perspective on failure to render aid, that is, when one is flourishing themselves, but sees others who struggle with great hardships and thinks it does not matter to him:

Now admittingly if such an attitude were a universal law of nature, mankind could get on perfectly well—better no doubt than if everybody prates about sympathy and good will. . . . But although it is possible that a universal law of nature could subsist in harmony with this maxim, yet it is impossible to *will* that such a principle should hold everywhere as a law of nature. For a will which decided in this way would be in conflict with itself, since many a situation might arise in which the man needed love and sympathy from other, and in which, by such a law of nature sprung from his own will, he would rob himself of all hope of the help he wants for himself (3-4).

In other words, this quote means that one has a duty as a deontologist to render aid—doing otherwise is impossible to will as a universal principle of law. So, a duty to render aid—including aid for refugees and immigrants is essential to a deontological ethic. One person who sketches out what this looks like John Rawls, from his book, *The Law of Peoples*.

In the *Law of Peoples*, Rawls states that societies have a duty to assist, what he calls, burdened societies. In this way, Rawls can add a unique conditional to this essay: in addition to

the United States assisting people to migrate to the United States, the U.S. also carries a duty to assist the burdened society from where the refugees and immigrants come from back to being a favorable society. Why must the U.S. do this? Because it follows from their duty to assist peoples burdened by unfavorable conditions. The aim of this duty is to help burden societies attain liberal or “decent” institutions, secure human rights, and meet basic needs. Or, to further explicate, to bring burdened societies into the society of well-ordered peoples (432). When this is achieved, then the duty has been completed. By burdened societies, Rawls states “Burdened societies. . . lack the political and cultural traditions, the human capital and know-how, and, often, the material and technological resources needed to be well-ordered” (*Global Ethics*, 432).

There are three guidelines for Rawls regarding duties of assistance to burdened societies. The first guideline for completing one’s duty of justice is that a nation need not be wealthy to be considered well-ordered. There are several reasons for this, first, the purpose of making a well-ordered society a well-ordered society is to “establish just basic institutions for a constitutional democratic society” and to ensure an environment that makes a fruitful life possible for its citizens (432). Second, saving and accumulating wealth may stop once a society locks into place the necessary institutions which grant the flourishing of life. Then, a society need not collect further monies, but instead just maintain, reuse, and replace what they already have. Since the society would be replacing rather than saving and accumulating funds, wealth would spike at a certain point before petering out and remaining linear (433). Third, wealth as a concept is too vague and relative. Wealth to the United States will differ significantly from wealth in third world countries. The amount of wealth a society needs depends on its country and conception of justice, and therefore the amount of wealth is not comparable between two differently crafted well-ordered societies (432).

The second guideline is that the “political culture of a burdened society is all-important,” which means that there is no one single recipe for well-ordered societies to assist burdened in changing the political, economic, and social cultures (433). Rawls states that resource poor countries (Japan) can be well-ordered and flourish, whereas resource rich countries (Argentina) can be a burdened society (434). The crucial elements that make a difference are “the political culture, the political virtues and civic society of the country, its members’ probity, and industriousness, their capacity for innovation, and much else” (434). In other words, it is not the resources that dictate whether a society is well-ordered, but instead *what they do* with the resources that determines the society’s success. In addition to these resources come another: population. A society must be sure not to overpopulate its lands with people it cannot take care, otherwise the society risks being unable to take care of all its people at the expense of adding a few more. Further, the United States solely dispensing funds to fix burdened societies is not enough. The emphasis needs to be on human rights, not on monetary funds. Moreover, since women’s rights often get left out (see the costs section of this thesis), the decisions involving women must include a majority of women making these decisions (435).

The third guideline affirms that the aim of the duty to help burdened societies is targeted so that such burdened societies become able to manage their own affairs reasonably and rationally—to where they eventually become part of the well-ordered societies. In other words, the society in question must be allowed to maintain their culture, history, and ability of self-determination. This is a huge factor for Rawls, as the ability to manifest one’s destiny is critical to who they are as a person (identity). Next, we turn to the last ethical part of the thesis—how a Christian in America should respond.

It is no secret that the issue of immigration is a divisive one, and this includes divisive opinions amongst Christians. However, although immigration divides Christians, the Christian faith is quite clear on the issue: one has a duty to help, protect, and speak out for immigrant. Despite this teaching, many conservatives and evangelicals, who often consider themselves to be the most religious—speak out the hardest on immigration. Although some institutions, like the Catholic Church, have taken the reins in speaking out for immigrants and for immigration reform, Catholics and other Christians alike have not joined their churches in this cause. In this section, I aim to articulate a proper ethic on immigration and immigrants and refugees through a Christian perspective, with the hope that it reaches the minds—and hearts—of people who put their faith at the center of their lives.

Nearly every religious church and group have advocated in favor of liberalized immigration—including The National Association of Evangelicals, Roman Catholic bishops, and mainline Protestant denominations, according to Alan F. H. Wisdom, vice president of the Institute on Religion and Democracy. Despite this, there still exists a clear divide between the views of practitioners of Christianity and the actual biblical basis for Christians to respond to immigration and refugees. There is a biblical basis and vision for love of the stranger in both the Old and New Testament.

In the Old Testament, Exodus tells the story of the Chosen People, who were victims of bitter slavery in Egypt. The Israelites' experience of living as homeless migrants was so painful, frightening, and troubling, that God ordered his people to have special care for the alien: "You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself; for you too were once aliens in the land of Egypt" (Lv

19:33-34).” The Israelites lived due to God’s intervention, and if God is willing to intercede on behalf of refugees and immigrants, then there is no excuse as to why we cannot as well.

The New Testament begins with Matthew’s story of Mary and Joseph’s escape with Jesus to Egypt because King Herod wanted Jesus dead. The Christian savior Himself lived as a refugee because his own land was not safe. Further, a passage from Mathew states "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me" (Mt 25:35). Paul asserts the absolute equality of all God’s people, "There is neither Jew nor Greek . . . for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal 3:28). In Christ, humanity is one before God, equal in dignity and rights.

Another issue compelling Christians to act kindly towards the stranger is the notion that every human carries human dignity, which acts as the image of God Himself. A common phrase in Christianity is that the face of every person is the face of God. How many paths are there to God? As many as there are people. As a result, God is present in each and every person. When we turn away immigrants and refugees, we are degrading the person God made, thereby committing a sin with dual nature. First, we reject our brother and sister when we turn them away, thereby refusing to see their inherent worth. Second, we degrade God’s creation, which poses a major problem for Christians and the Christian faith. God’s feelings towards the marginalized and most despised in society are well-note, as these quotes show. A Christian has no excuse to not act more Christian like on the issue of immigration refugee placement.

However, there are certainly still objection to the thesis that one can invoke as a means to take a stance of inaction towards refugees and immigrants. One objection to this thesis can be drawn from Garrett Hardin’s lifeboat ethic, which is a case against helping the poor. In his work,

Hardin asserts that rich nations, like the United States, should not opt into providing aid and assistance to poor people, immigrants, and refugees in fear that the addition of these people would deplete the resources of the United States, thereby dooming all—what he dubs the tragedy of the commons. He uses the analogy a lifeboat as an analogy of the rich nations like the United States. In other words, we are all adrift at sea, we have room for maybe ten more people in the boat, and around us are hundreds of people drowning. Hardin argues that even if we chose to take on ten more people from sea, we risk losing our “safety factor” (17). For these reasons, he advocates leaving the people at sea and opting to accept no more. People who feel bad for the poor, he says, should trade places with them.

There are several responses I want to make on this front. First, if Hardin is worried about overpopulation and depletion of the world’s resources, then he should simultaneously be concerned with ensuring poor nations who reproduce at faster rates no longer remain in poverty. Rawls has the answer to this: work to ensure burdened societies join the league of well-ordered societies. Even if we were to follow Hardin’s advice and not allow people in (which we should not do, allowing people in affords them the opportunity to join a well-ordered society and alleviate poverty for them), it still does not solve his main issue of using resources. Eventually, the world’s poor will become so hungry and in need of resources, that the poor will begin warfare as a means of collecting resources. Now, if 2/3 of the world are classified as poor as Hardin states they are, then the world’s rich are severely outnumbered, and even if advanced technology, the affect this world have on the planet is less than desirable, as war also uses up tremendous amounts of resources.

Second, Hardin inadequately ignores what justice demands and fails to provide a sufficient reason for acting contrary to conventional thought on immigration and refugees in

liberal circles. Hardin states, “Our craving for intellectual order leads us to seek and prefer symmetrical rules and morals: a single rule for me and everyone else; the same rule yesterday, today, and tomorrow. Justice, we feel, should not change with time and place. . . . However morally or logically sound this proposal may be, I, for one, am unwilling to live by it and I know no one else who is” (*Global Ethics*, 25-26). In a way, Hardin already has answered his own objection: just because he or anyone else feel angered in being pulled to act in one way or another because of justice, one’s anger in feeling compelled to act in such a way is in no way an excuse to not act on that which is just. Selfishness is *not* a virtue. Further, as Singer’s consequentialist view laid out, the immigrants and refugees have far more to lose than we do. As technology increases, as will our ability to grow, maintain, and allocate food. One last point: it is not necessarily the case that we in the world are overpopulated, or that we lack resources for all—instead, what happens to be the case is that we in the West are far too selfish for our own good. A person can realistically live on just a few dollars a day, but we in the United States are blind to that reality due to our materialistic habits and lifestyle. These points come from Canadian reporter and author Michael Coren, who also claimed the entirety of the world’s population can live in Texas and have 1200 square feet for each of them. Truly, overpopulation is not the issue, like what Hardin makes it out to be, instead, it is selfishness and lack of care for others.

One more objection needs answering: What about our people? Surely, we have more of a duty to our own citizens than to potential citizens? The entirety of this paper is not to diminish the needs of our countries own poor and marginalized. To borrow a phrase from Singer, it is not that the people of the U.S. do not face serious challenges regarding poverty, it is just that the world’s immigrants and refugees face a different type of poverty than that here in the United

States. And yes, we certainly have a duty to our own citizens, but the point this thesis has tried to make is that we also have a duty to immigrants and refugees—people who often receive little to no help from our country despite having a dire need for our aid.

To conclude this thesis, I want to end with detailing the future of identity, not just for America, but for the rest of the world. If my thesis stands, the idea that American identity is available to all who wish to obtain it, then another question follows: Are other places around the world capable of the same such thing, to have foreign migrants become who they are, such as French, Greek, or Chinese? To this I say the following: I am unsure, but as time goes on, I have no doubt that the answer will be made clear to us.

The reasons I am unsure are as follows. First, the United States has a complicated and intricate history with people of diverse backgrounds that make it stand out from other countries. What I mean to say here, is that the rest of the world falls far behind the United States in terms of dealing with race relations and questions of identity. Lavandera said this at the symposium I attended months ago, and I agree with him. The United States' history is filled with example of racial clashes, from the Native Americans, to the introduction of slaves and African Americans, the European migration, to Hispanic and Middle-Eastern migrations of today—the United States always has and always will have questions about identity and what it means to become American and be American. Also consider, minorities are the fastest growing group in the United States, very soon, in the next 100 years or so, whites will constitute a very small makeup of the United States. As time goes, our identity changes and gets challenged, and we do a fairly good job of adjusting to this, despite many racial tensions here in the U.S.

Second, consider a place such as Europe. For the first time in their respective history, they are dealing with a huge identity crisis in response to the influx of migrants seeking refuge in their lands. This crisis has led to certain countries opting to leave the European Union. Therefore, I am unsure of what to make about the concept of identity being fluid in every respect and not just possibly in the United States. Time will tell what the migrants will do to the European

Union, but I do believe Europe, as it stands today, will not exist as we know it in the next 100 years. It will be radically different with the movements of people reproducing and bringing over their cultures to add to a very white ethnocentric Europe. I hope the questions I explored here in this thesis will be re-written years from now from the perspective of the European writing after the refugee crisis ends. That would be fascinating.

This thesis explored several components. First, it talked of the costs that were bared in ensuring the United States existed, and of the people who have been persecuted in crafting our country. Then the paper turned to the political climate that surrounds immigration, after which the concept of what it means to be an American was discussed, and what qualities and characteristics need to in place to become an American. Finally, the paper turned towards the philosophy and ethics that surrounds immigrants and refugees, with focus on the duties of states to immigrants and refugees, and how consequentialist, deontologists, Christians should view respond to the issue. Finally, objections were presented, elaborated, and critiqued. The paper then concluded with a brief note about the future of identity in not just American, but in other places in the world as well.

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