

BOOK REVIEWS

***The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*, Mary C. Waters and Reed Ueda, eds. with Helen B. Marrow. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007. ISBN 13: 978-0674023574; 721 pages**

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The decades following World War II witnessed a changing face of the United States as a new set of policies led to the reception of an unprecedented flow of immigrants from around the world. *The New Americans: A Guide to Immigration since 1965*, edited by Reed Ueda and Mary C. Waters, assesses this new wave of immigration, which produced a generation of “New Americans” with unusual names, eating habits, religious beliefs, cultures, and languages. The book’s quality is clearly an outcome of Reed Ueda’s great knowledge of the subject as an historian of immigration, and Mary C. Waters’s expertise on the sociological aspects of immigration and inter-group relations. The third editor is Helen B. Marrow, whose dissertation won the American Sociological Association’s Best Dissertation Award for 2008.

The example of Somerville, a small neighborhood in Boston, is given at the beginning of the Introduction to show how the United States changed its ethnic structure several years ago. As a longtime resident stated, “Somerville is changing... You see it in Union Square, where there are Asian, South Asian, Caribbean, Portuguese, and Latin American markets and Cambodian-French, Armenian-Lebanese, Portuguese, country Korean, Brazilian, Chinese, Indian, Greek, and French bistro joints.” (p.1) The immigration restriction acts passed in the 1920’s halted the migration of large numbers of many ethnic groups, especially those from eastern and southern Europe, for a long time. But in 1965 immigration laws and

policies again changed significantly, leading to the admission of many new ethnic groups in large numbers. It is these “new immigrants” now populating many American cities and suburbs who form the subject of *The New Americans*.

The organization of articles and their sequences is one of the strong points of this book. Following a fine introduction by Reed Ueda and Mary C. Waters, the immigration phenomenon is taken up in thematic articles where both empirical material and scholarly interpretation are masterfully employed. Among the themes treated in this, the first half of the book, are immigration from the global historical perspective, citizenship and nationality policy, ethnic and racial identity, assimilation, language, religion, and education. The articles are organized in a way that reveals various aspects of the new immigration. The first five articles deal with intended and unintended effects of U.S. immigration laws on immigrants; the next two concern the ethnic and racial identities of immigrants, their offspring, and the effects of intermarriage on identity. After three essays taking different approaches to assimilation and transnationalism, the next seven essays take up the effects of immigration on economics, politics, media, religion, language, and education.

Every article includes a comparison of the immigrants of the so-called mass migration movement and those who migrated to US after 1965, thus providing the reader a historical perspective. Moreover, each key term is provided with a definition, a literature review, and interpretations from different perspectives. Following these discussions of the “big picture” in the first half of the book, specific immigrant groups are examined. The second half focuses on migrant-sending regions such as West Africa, East Africa, Canada, Central America, China, Colombia, Western Europe, Central and Southeastern Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa. In these thirty-one articles the reader will find the most recent scholarship on each subject. The articles are arranged in alphabetical order, contributing to the book’s encyclopedic nature and adding to its usefulness as a reference work. Each ethnic group is discussed within the historical framework of its first entry into the USA in considerable numbers, mostly during the so-called mass migrations that took place between 1850 and 1930. The reader is thus provided a background and an historical scheme illustrating how the characteristics of a given immigrant group and government policies towards them both changed over time. The immigration issues discussed in the first part of the book, i.e., transnationalism, assimilation, ethnic media, education, language and religion are employed in the specific analyses of these groups. The analyses are supported admirably by charts and



tables full of statistics. An appendix provides a useful list of all the immigration laws passed between 1790 and 2005, giving both their official and popular names, such as the Act of 1965, known also as the Hart-Celler Act after its lawmakers.

Immigration, which became a visible national debate in the 1920's, is still a subject that shapes domestic and foreign policies of the United States. Assimilation and integration of immigrants has always been an important issue, and once again it had become a public debate since prejudice against certain ethnic and religious groups became more pronounced after 9/11. A comprehensive and inclusive guide to immigration such as *The New Americans*, consisting of articles by distinguished scholars from diverse backgrounds, is an excellent reference for students of history, political science, and international relations, for scholars, and for everyone who wants to learn more about the current debates and dynamics surrounding the immigration phenomenon in the United States.