

**Immigration to the City of Philadelphia:
An Economic and Historical Overview**

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Throughout Philadelphia's history, the interplay of global economic change, international political upheaval and immigration law have transformed the city's demography. The current immigration wave, like those before it, has brought far fewer foreign-born to Philadelphia than to other American cities its size. Still, immigration to Philadelphia, today as earlier, has dramatically altered the region's economic, cultural and political life.

Philadelphia's career as a "low immigrant" city has long roots. In the middle of the nineteenth century, large numbers of Irish and German immigrants then pouring into the United States made Philadelphia their home. Indeed, the proportion of foreign-born in Philadelphia reached its peak in 1870 at 27%. To quote one historian, "After 1870, the city never again supported a foreign-born population commensurate with its size, seaport location and industrial magnitude." Still, even at that early date, Philadelphia was a much more native-born city than many other Northern cities. In the same year, Boston was roughly a third foreign-born and immigrants comprised about 45% of New York's population. Meanwhile, newer cities like Chicago and Milwaukee were nearly half immigrant.¹

By the turn of the twentieth century, as tens of millions of Southern and Eastern Europeans struggled to find homes throughout the United States, Philadelphia's industrial landscape and existing demography further curtailed immigrant settlement in the city. The city's already well-established network of industrial enterprises had utilized a good

¹ Caroline Golab, *Immigrant Destinations* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1977) 8; Caroline Golab, "The Immigrant in the City: Poles, Italians, and Jews in Philadelphia, 1870-1920," in Allen F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, eds., *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1973) 204.

deal of Philadelphia's available land. This scarcity of good industrial real estate spelled high rents and discouraged the construction of the large-scale factories that attracted masses of unskilled immigrants to other American cities. Instead, well into the twentieth-century, Philadelphia remained a city of diverse, small-scale manufacturing enterprises relying on an unusually high number of female and skilled laborers. Textile and clothing manufacturing, a mainstay of female employment, dominated the city's economy followed by the production of metal products. Yet with the exception of enterprises like Philadelphia's Midvale Steel and Disston Saw Works, which provided thousands of jobs to unskilled immigrants, the city's metal sector relied primarily on smaller shops employing skilled and semi-skilled workers, not on the large steel mills that attracted unskilled immigrants to other industrial towns. And while some unskilled immigrants found work in the city's other large enterprises, such as Baldwin Locomotives, employment in Philadelphia's extensive shipbuilding industry was largely closed off to most new immigrant groups until World War I, when government contracts increased demand enough to offer widespread opportunities for Italian, Russian and Polish workers in the industry. These groups maintained a foothold in shipbuilding after the war, yet the combination of an international depression in the shipbuilding industry and the coming of immigration restriction meant that the industry never drew a large number of immigrants to the city.²

Meanwhile, the city's major printing and publishing industry, where English fluency was often required, remained a primarily native-born or old immigrant domain.

The manufacture of leather and leather products was the only leading sector of

² Thomas R. Heinrich, *Ships for the Seven Seas: Philadelphia Shipbuilding in the Age of Industrial Capitalism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997) 190. On immigrant employment at Baldwin Locomotives, see Caroline Golab, "The Immigrant in the City," 219.

Philadelphia's manufacturing economy that consistently demanded unskilled, male labor. Here as in other parts of Philadelphia's economy, unskilled immigrants from Southern and Eastern Europe had to compete with Philadelphia's sizeable Irish and African American populations for a limited number of unskilled jobs. Newer, unskilled immigrants, especially Slavs, eventually found jobs in Philadelphia's leather industry, primarily as tanners, while Poles, Slavs and other largely unskilled groups found work in the city's construction industry and at the city's port. Still, the Irish and African American presence in Philadelphia continued to provide stiff competition for unskilled immigrants seeking work in the city.

The particular configuration of Philadelphia's labor market tended to attract certain immigrant groups— those with previous craft experience and those that planned on remaining in the United States, and therefore, included large numbers of wives and daughters. Russian Jews, who fled to the United States in the face of religious and political oppression, rarely planned on returning home. Their prior experience in crafts and commerce and the many women among them made Philadelphia's economy appealing. By 1920, they far outnumbered any immigrant group in the city, 85,277 in all. Italians comprised the second largest group with 68,420, followed by the Irish with 61,961.

While most unskilled immigrant groups struggled to find work in Philadelphia, Italians were able to find a niche working on the city's array of public improvement projects. Here, just as they found jobs on farms near Philadelphia, Italians were able to gain jobs where other immigrant groups could not because of their reliance on the *padrone* system, an organizational strategy in which a professional broker matched

batches of Italian workers with discrete projects demanding unskilled labor. Employers with short-term labor needs, like contractors on public works programs, took advantage of the *padrone* system's ready-made organization to secure a sizeable, temporary labor force quickly and efficiently. At the same time, many Italian immigrants did not intend to stay in the United States but came as a means of making money to improve their lot back in Italy. This perhaps made them more willing to endure the drudgery of many public works projects, like laying sewers or digging subways, jobs many native-born workers tended to avoid.

After the Russians, Italians and Irish, Germans comprised the next largest foreign-born group in the city in 1920 at around 40,000. Poles followed at 30,565. Other new immigrant groups – like Hungarians, Lithuanians and Rumanians – settled in much smaller numbers; even English immigrants far outnumbered them.³

The immigrants that settled in early-twentieth century Philadelphia did so in a familiar pattern well described by the concentric zone model of the Chicago School. By 1930, the combined forces of the housing market, access to transportation and the spatial layout of industry, led working-class immigrants to remain in the industrial center of the city, often clustering in recognizable ethnic enclaves. This was especially the case for the city's Italian and Polish immigrants who needed to live close to their place of employment and, not coincidentally, could afford real estate only in more industrialized districts. African Americans joined these workers living in the old industrial core, as did a small group of Chinese immigrants, about 1,000 of them in 1940. Only a third of the city's Chinese, however, clustered in the city's small Chinatown. Most scattered

³ Golab, *Immigrant Destinations*, 28, 30-33, 55-59. Unless otherwise noted, figures for the foreign born population are based on an IPUMS micro-sample: <http://www.ipums.org>

throughout the central city. Russian Jews, after a time gathering in South Philadelphia, tended to accumulate enough money to move to the streetcar suburbs in northwest and west Philadelphia. Meanwhile, comparatively elite white collar and skilled workers, including many German and Irish, as well as the native born, lived in the suburbs furthest from the industrial center, some of them forsaking streetcars for an automobile commute to work.⁴

In the wake of immigration restriction in 1924, the proportions and types of immigrants settling in Philadelphia shaped the ethnic feel of the city for decades to come. Eastern European Jews remained a major presence in the region as did the Irish. Germans stayed in the vicinity in large numbers, their presence becoming less visible as the socially mobile dispersed throughout the region and as Germans rushed to assimilate in the wake of World War I.⁵ Even as many Italians returned to Italy, many remained in the city, establishing a stronghold in South Philadelphia and, after World War II, moving increasingly to nearby suburbs. Poles and other European immigrant groups, by comparison, remained much less of an overall presence in the region. The lure of New York City's Chinatown persistently curbed the expansion of Philadelphia's. Still, the city's Chinese population continued to grow, and the visibility of the city's small but vibrant Chinatown continued to make the Chinese presence known.⁶

⁴ Theodore Hershberg, et al., "A Tale of three Cities: Blacks, Immigrants, and Opportunity in Philadelphia, 1850-1880, 1930, 1970," in Hershberg, ed., *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family and Group Experience in the 19th Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981) 474-476; Jae-Hyp-Lee, *Dynamics of Ethnic Identity: Three Asian Communities in Philadelphia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998) 52.

⁵ For the issue of German immigrant assimilation in Philadelphia and generally, see *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁶ For the impact of proximity to New York on Philadelphia's Chinatown, see Jae-Hyup Lee, 52.

Forty years separated the federal government's restriction of immigration in 1924 and the re-opening of the borders under new legal rules in 1965. In Philadelphia two major demographic trends marked the interim: a massive influx of African American migrants and mass suburbanization of the region's white population. These two trends were joined by a third, much smaller, but nonetheless historically significant development: the establishment of the city's fledgling Puerto Rican community.

In 1920 the city's black population stood at 191,222. By 1930, the figure had risen to 299,898. Thereafter, the lure of wartime jobs, a postwar economic boom and a desire to escape the Jim Crow South brought an even more dramatic surge in the city's African American population. In 1950, the city's black population reached 480,075, or 13.1% of the whole, and by 1960, there were over a half million black Philadelphians. Meanwhile, with the widespread construction of suburbs after World War II, white Philadelphians moved out of the city in droves, as the common story of white flight and the search for less congested living were complicated by the increasing need to relocate as jobs also fled to the nearby suburbs. In 1960, whites comprised 74.3% of the city's population; by 1980 the figure had plummeted to 58.5%.⁷

Numerically dwarfed by these trends, the slow growth of Philadelphia's Puerto Rican population – so central to the city's life today – began during World War II and continued through the postwar years. Thanks overwhelmingly to Puerto Rican settlement in the city, Philadelphia's Latino population more than doubled between 1950 and 1953, from 2,000 to 7,000, although these figures and those that immediately follow are

⁷ Carolyn Adams, et al., *Philadelphia: Neighborhoods, Division, and Conflict in a Postindustrial City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) 9, 18. Black population in 1960 was calculated using the City Data Book on the University of Virginia's Geospatial and Statistical Data Center website: <http://fisher.lib.virginia.edu>

generally treated as undercounts. By 1960, the number had reached 14,000 and by 1970 28,000.⁸ By the end of this period, Philadelphia had accumulated the third largest Puerto Rican population in the country, behind New York and Chicago.⁹

Puerto Rican migration to Philadelphia resulted from the push of economic transition in Puerto Rico and the pull of a demand for cheap labor on the mainland. Puerto Rico's postwar economic policy of replacing the island's agricultural economy with an export-oriented industrial sector meant wrenching displacement in Puerto Rico's rural areas. Between 1940 and 1970, Puerto Rico's rural population fell from 70% to 42%. In what one demographer called, "one of the greatest population exoduses registered in contemporary history," 700,000 islanders moved from the countryside to Puerto Rican cities during these years; 388,000 moved to the mainland United States. U.S. policymakers' search for cheap labor to fuel the postwar economy helped drive this migration, as government programs recruited many Puerto Ricans to work on the mainland as contract-laborers. Contract labor programs brought many Puerto Ricans to the Philadelphia area: women as domestic workers and employees in local textile factories; men as laborers on nearby farms and in a handful of local factories, including Camden's Campbell Soup Company, which heavily recruited Puerto Rican workers during the labor shortages of World War II. In time, many migrants proved ready to use temporary labor contracts as an unpleasant but necessary step to gaining a permanent foothold on the mainland. Other Puerto Ricans traveled to Philadelphia without the mixed blessing of a labor contract, but even those who came on their own benefited from

⁸ Judith Good and Jo Anne Schneider, *Reshaping Ethnic and Racial Relations in Philadelphia: Immigrants in a Divided City* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994) 50.

⁹ Carmen Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001) 2.

the social networks built by Puerto Rican contract laborers.¹⁰ Even as contract labor dwindled, Philadelphia's Puerto Rican population continued to grow, as displaced farmers and underemployed urban workers came to the mainland in search of better economic opportunities and often to reconnect with family members. In 1980, experts placed the Latino population in Philadelphia at roughly 80,000, with the overwhelming majority still Puerto Rican.¹¹

Although the federal government re-opened the borders under new regulations in 1965, the most recent wave of immigration to Philadelphia intensified only after 1980 and to a much greater extent after 1990. These newcomers entered an economy drastically different than the one their late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century predecessors had encountered. First, Philadelphia was now a regional economy. Where the city proper had once dominated the local economic scene, now industry was radically decentralized, with the once strong central city gravely weakened and the bulk of jobs dispersed throughout nearby suburbs. Meanwhile, the old industries that had helped shape earlier immigration to the city were now largely defunct. Once one of the country's great manufacturing hubs, the fate of Philadelphia, and its new regional economy, now depended on its service sector. Finally, new immigrants settled in a region consistently struggling against slow rates of economic growth.

The flight of industry from the City of Philadelphia had begun well before World War II, but thereafter, the combination of federal housing subsidies, highway construction, and the search for lower taxes accelerated capital flight from the old urban

¹⁰ Whalen, 2, 10-12, 49-55. Quotation is from Jose Vasquez Calzada, quoted in Whalen, p. 2.

¹¹ Goode and Schneider, 50. For the decline of Puerto Rican contract labor, see Whalen, 202.

core. While many of these businesses left the region altogether, others relocated to nearby suburbs where they have since been joined by new enterprises. Some raw numbers illustrate this trend. Between 1970 and 2000, the City of Philadelphia lost over 250,000 full- and part-time jobs. During the same period, however, the eight suburban counties immediately surrounding the city added over a million.¹²

Widening our geographic scope beyond the 8 counties just next to the city further underscores the trend of the decentralization of employment. Analysis of a 28-county region in and around the City of Philadelphia shows that the rates of job growth in the 19 counties furthest from the central city far outpaced the rate of the city and its immediate surroundings between 1970 and 2000. The rate of growth for the nineteen, comparatively fast growing counties in the region -- a region stretching from Lancaster, PA through Delaware and into Maryland – enjoyed employment growth rates of 29% in the 1970s, 16% in the 1980s, and 24% in the 1990s. Philadelphia County and the eight nearest to it, however, showed growth rates of just 5% in the 1970s, 17% in the 1980s and 9% in the 1990s.¹³

While the dispersal of industry was a trend shared almost universally in postwar metropolitan America, the spatial distribution of industry in the Philadelphia region has taken on a distinct and troublesome form. While in many regions suburbs developed concentrated industrial centers of their own, sometimes referred to as “edge cities,” the landscape of employment in Philadelphia is now marked by “very low-density

¹² Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), “Regional Economic Information System (REIS) Employment, 1970-2000,” *Delaware Valley Data: Regional Data Bulletin*, No. 74 (Oct. 2002) 3-4. As of August, 2007, the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission reports cited here are available at <http://www.dvrpc.org/data/databull.htm>. The eight suburban counties immediately surrounding the city referred to here and in the paragraph immediately below are: in New Jersey – Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Mercer counties; in Pennsylvania – Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery counties.

¹³ DVRPC, “Regional Economic Information System (REIS), 1970-2000, 5-6.

commercial activity,” that, when mapped, most resembles scattershot.¹⁴ Take the suburban part of the region that lies within Pennsylvania’s boundaries, for instance. A few spatial concentrations of employment do exist – in King of Prussia or in Conshohocken, for instance – but for the most part businesses are disbursed throughout the area. Among the many side effects of this overall deconcentration of industry is a staggering pace of sprawl in the region, a trend accelerated by preferences for certain types of housing and the dynamics of local taxation, but nonetheless influenced by industrial location. Between 1987 and 1997, when local population grew by a mere 4%, the amount of developed land in the region grew by 33%.¹⁵

As jobs shifted away from the city within an overall environment of slow economic development, the types of jobs found in the region also changed dramatically. Between 1970 and 2000, in the City of Philadelphia and its eight nearest counties, the proportion of jobs in manufacturing plummeted from over 25% to close to 10%, while the proportion in services skyrocketed from 20% to nearly 40%. The eclipse of manufacturing by service industries occurred early in this period, by one study’s account as early as 1974. Although between 1970 and 2000, the proportion in each construction, transportation, wholesale trade, and retail trade stayed more or less steady, the proportion of jobs in finance, insurance and real estate in the region grew from just over 5% to just under 10%. In a notable trend, the percentage of government-related jobs in the region

¹⁴ Metropolitan Philadelphia Policy Center, *Fight or Flight: Philadelphia and Its Future* (Philadelphia, 2001), 63.

¹⁵ *Fight or Flight*, 55, 60. For more on the spatial distribution of industry in the Philadelphia region, see Robert E. Lang, “Edgeless Cities: Exploring the elusive Metropolis,” *Greater Philadelphia Regional Review* (Summer, 2002) 4-9.

decreased markedly during the same period, from a little more than 15% to just above 10%.¹⁶

Yet amid this rapid economic change, the region as a whole consistently wrestled with stagnation. Between 1970 and 2000, job growth in the Philadelphia region ranked nineteenth out of the twenty largest metropolitan areas in the country. By the 1990s, even job growth in the region's suburbs fell well behind the national average. Still, despite these bleak aggregate trends, the region enjoyed strength in a variety of sectors, many of them luring immigrants to the region. First, the region is home to over eighty institutions of higher learning, many of them leaders in research, the liberal arts and technical training. The region became home to a reasonably strong financial and professional service sector, a group of industries capable of offering employment to highly skilled and unskilled immigrants alike. It also has fared well in comparison to the rest of the nation in the fields of legal services, computer services and consulting. More recently, the Philadelphia region has come to boast a very competitive biotechnology sector and currently compares favorably to the rest of the nation for employment in the education, health care and social services.¹⁷ And while the region overall has not enjoyed a high rate of development, one of the important traits of the region's industrial decentralization is the existence of pockets within the region enjoying reasonably high rates of growth. In the 1990s, for instance, counties like Chester, PA, Somerset, NJ, and

¹⁶ DVRPC, "Three Decades of Job Growth and Decline in the Delaware Valley: Analyzing the Region's Economic Base by Sector," *Delaware Valley Data: Analytical Data Report*, No. 10 (Feb., 2003,) 6, 8; DVRPC, "Regional Economic Information System (REIS), 1970-2000," 5.

¹⁷ *Fight or Flight*, 27, 45-46; DVRPC, "Three Decades of Job Growth...", 12-13; DVRPC, "Employment Base and Economic Census Update," *Delaware Valley Data: Analytical Data Report*, No. 12, (May, 2006) 1. On biotechnology in the Philadelphia region, see Joseph Cortright and Heike Mayer, "Signs of Life: The Growth of Biotechnology Centers in the U.S.," *Greater Philadelphia Regional Review* (Spring 2003) 20-23.

Harford, MD showed job growth rates of 30% or higher while Hunterdon, NJ enjoyed a rate of 29%. Another five counties in the 28-county region surrounding the city posted gains 20% or higher.¹⁸

It is against this economic backdrop of overall stagnation, with pockets of success and abysmal decline, industrial sprawl and the unequal rewards of the new service economy that immigrants, African Americans and native-born whites in the Philadelphia region have encountered one another in recent years. Yet when new immigrants first began arriving to Philadelphia in sizeable numbers in the early 1980s, they did not immediately follow local jobs to nearby suburbs. Indeed, immigrant suburbanization in the region is a relatively new development, although in recent years it has far outpaced immigration to the city proper. Instead, most new immigrants initially settled in the old, economically debilitated urban core, where they found a city divided sharply between black and white with a small but growing Latino population, primarily Puerto Rican, and the continued presence of Chinese.¹⁹ At the time, almost exclusively white suburbs encircled the city. Many assimilated white ethnics of previous immigrant waves and their descendants had found their way to the suburbs, yet many of the less upwardly mobile remained in the city, vying, sometimes violently, with black Philadelphians for power, turf, and the political upper-hand. For these new immigrants, the precipitous fall in the city's population that coincided with the decentralization of industry and the flight of manufacturing may have meant readily available housing, but often amidst racial and economic tension.

¹⁸ DVRPC, "Regional Economic Information System (REIS), 1970-2000," 5-6. The other five counties showing gains of 20% or more were: Kent, DE, New Castle, DE, Cecil, MD, Ocean, NJ, and Gloucester, NJ. The DVRPC report also gives similar figures for the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁹ Goode and Schneider especially emphasize the notion of immigrants entering a divided city. See Goode and Schneider, 49.

Such was the case for the many Southeast Asian refugees resettled in Philadelphia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The government agencies in charge of finding homes for them tended to find open housing in borderland areas, where the combination of gentrification and job loss had already pushed lower income residents out. Vietnamese, Cambodian and other Southeast Asian refugees in Philadelphia most often found themselves wedged between struggling African American communities and significantly wealthier neighborhoods. Settled in West Philadelphia, in North Philadelphia's Olney and Logan sections, and in South Philadelphia, refugees had to struggle to make an already difficult cultural adjustment amidst existing black-white racial animosity and economic tension. The consequences of life in these borderlands were harsh. According to the Philadelphia Commission on Human Relations, for instance, Asian Philadelphians comprised roughly a quarter of the victims of interracial incidents in the city in the late 1980s; at the time, Asians comprised only three to five percent of the city's total population.²⁰ A small group of Hmong refugees who resettled in Philadelphia faced so much adversity that they fled the city, mostly for established Hmong settlements in Minnesota and Wisconsin.²¹ Yet most Southeast Asian refugees in Philadelphia persisted, establishing an extensive business and retail district in South Philadelphia and increasingly leaving the instability of West and Southwest Philadelphia for nearby suburbs, particularly Upper Darby.²²

²⁰ Ella Somekawa, "On the Edge: Southeast Asians in Philadelphia and the Struggle for Space," in Wendy L. Ng, et al., eds., *Reviewing Asian America: Locating Diversity* (Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 1995) 33-37, 44.

²¹ Marc Kaufman, "Embattled Hmong Plan to Leave City," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Sept. 7, 1984.

²² Jae-Hyp Lee, *Dynamics of Ethnic Identity: Three Asian Communities in Philadelphia* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1998) 59-60.

By 1990 Koreans also made up a sizeable proportion of Asian immigrants in Philadelphia. Middle-class Koreans, frustrated with opportunities in their own country, proved ready to take advantage of the 1965 immigration law's skills-based employment preference system. Others obtained professional training in the United States and were able to remain here. Once settled, Korean immigrants sponsored their relatives' visa petitions. Those that joined more established professional Koreans in the United States often had similarly high levels of education as their predecessors but struggled to transfer their credentials or to overcome an initial language barrier. These immigrants gravitated toward small business ownership, often experiencing considerable downward mobility for a time. Korean entrepreneurs established commercial districts in North Philadelphia, West Philadelphia Germantown and, in recent years, nearby Upper Darby.²³ In each of these areas, Korean storeowners have done business with the region's working-class, especially African American, populations. And like in other cities, where black-Korean tensions have boiled over into riots, conflict has sometimes defined relations here. Yet as one recent study reveals, the relationship between Korean storeowners and their clients in Philadelphia, as elsewhere, has most often been defined by tolerance and civility. In addition to these storeowners, a considerable set of working-class Koreans also migrated to the city, often through family sponsorship. Most work in the local garment industry, in laundries or in small stores, frequently employed at Korean or Chinese owned enterprises.²⁴

²³ Goode and Schneider, 51-52, 56; Jennifer Lee, *Civility in the City: Blacks, Jews, and Koreans in Urban America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002); 33-34; Jae-Hyup Lee, 55-56, 58.

²⁴ Goode and Schneider, 54; Jae-Hyup Lee, 58. For an account of African American/Korean relations in Philadelphia, see Jennifer Lee's *Civility in the City*.

Taken together, the growth and diversification of Philadelphia's Southeast and East Asian population defined new immigration to the city in the 1970s and 1980s. Since 1990, however, and especially in the last decade, the city has experienced a much more dramatic influx of immigrants and an increasingly complex pattern of diversification. Take the city's Latino population, for instance, which in 1990 remained almost exclusively Puerto Rican. Now immigrants from Central America, including Mexico, and the Spanish-speaking Caribbean comprise the largest foreign-born group in the city. In 2006 almost 6,000 Mexicans lived Philadelphia; another 20,000 Latinos hailed from elsewhere in Central America or the Caribbean. Meanwhile, the city's South American population, now almost 10,000 strong, almost doubled between 1990 and 2006.

Despite the diversity of Latino Philadelphia, however, Puerto Ricans still comprise the largest Spanish-speaking group in the city. Puerto Rico's manufacturing economy has continually failed to compensate for the dramatic decline of agricultural employment on the island, thus encouraging further migration to the mainland.²⁵ At the same time, Puerto Ricans who originally settled elsewhere in the continental United States have increasingly moved to Philadelphia. Indeed, in a very important and understudied trend, for a time Philadelphia's Puerto Rican population continued to grow by leaps and bounds even as the number of Puerto Ricans in other comparably large cities declined. According to one scholar, between 1970 and 2000 the city's Puerto Rican population, including those born in Puerto Rico and elsewhere, grew a staggering 240%, from 26,948 to 91,527. By comparison, New York City's Puerto Rican population decreased from 817,712 to 789,172, while Chicago's grew at a much more modest rate

²⁵ Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship, and the Making of the Puerto Rican Diaspora: An Introduction," in Whalen and Vazquez-Hernandez, *The Puerto Rican Diaspora*, 36.

(40%) than Philadelphia's.²⁶ As a leading historian of the Puerto Rican diaspora notes, in the final decades of the twentieth century, "[w]ith the exception of Philadelphia, larger cities seemed to lose their appeal." Instead, she continues, "Puerto Ricans increasingly settled in smaller cities, including Bridgeport, Hartford, and Waterbury, Connecticut; Springfield and Lawrence, Massachusetts; and Lancaster, Pennsylvania."²⁷ And yet in the new millennium it seems that Philadelphia's exceptional status no longer holds. Between 2000 and 2006, for instance, the number Philadelphians who had been born in Puerto Rico decreased sharply.

Another trend fueling the growth and diversification of immigrant in Philadelphia has been the arrival of a complex mix of African immigrants and refugees, hailing from over thirty countries with Nigeria and Liberia sending the most African immigrants to the city. Highly educated Africans began arriving soon after the 1965 immigration law was passed, and many went on to sponsor the migration of family members as well. Beginning in the 1980s and continuing into the new millennium, first Ethiopian and Eritrean refugees, and more recently, the displaced of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia and Sudan have settled here. Most Africans in Philadelphia hail from large African cities and have settled in West and Southwest Philadelphia while some Sudanese live in Northeast Philadelphia. Even as African immigrants to the United States have the highest educational attainment of any other immigrant group, they have struggled on the whole to transfer their skills here. Africans in Philadelphia have in particular established employment niches in nursing homes, as home health aides for the elderly, as parking

²⁶ Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship..." 32. Chicago's Puerto Rican population grew from 79,582 in 1970 to 113,055 in 2000.

²⁷ Whalen, "Colonialism, Citizenship..." 39.

attendants and driving taxis.²⁸ Much like Southeast Asian refugees before them, African refugee populations, settled in some of the most economically depressed areas of the city, have suffered a good deal of persecution in the United States. Their experience became painfully apparent after a 13-year old Liberian boy was brutally beaten in Southwest Philadelphia in the fall of 2005.²⁹

Numerically much more significant than African immigration, Central and Eastern Europeans now comprise one of the largest immigrant groups in the city. Poles and Ukrainians are the largest groups among Central and Eastern Europeans, followed by Russians and, most recently, Albanians who have settled in the Fishtown area of the city. The city's South Asian population, predominantly Indian, has tripled since 1990; the number of newcomers from the English- and French-speaking Caribbean has more than doubled as has the number of Middle Easterners in Philadelphia, most of them from Israel, the Palestinian territories and Jordan.

Today, Philadelphia remains a "low immigrant city," but its complex, immigrant mixture has been one of the only forces stanching the city's loss of population in recent years, a development that local politicians have begun to notice and to nurture.³⁰ Unlike earlier in its history, however, Philadelphia now has to compete with nearby suburbs as an immigrant destination. Moreover, it must do so within an increasingly politicized atmosphere. Antipathy toward the foreign born has been smoldering, and local immigrants, the documented and undocumented alike, have shown their willingness to

²⁸ Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, *Extended Lives, The African Immigrant Experience in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: The Balch Institute for Ethnic Studies, 2001) 3, 9 14-16.

²⁹ Robert Moran, "Residents Say Beating Fits Widespread Pattern," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Nov. 3, 2005.

³⁰ Goode and Schneider, 49; Niel A. Borowski, "Report: Blacks and Whites Are Leaving the City," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 15, 1999; Linda Harris, "Philadelphia Seeks to Attract More Immigrants," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 2000.

mobilize for better treatment. These dynamics came to the fore in the spring and summer of 2006 when within months headlines juxtaposed large immigrant marches against the posting of an “English-Only” sign in the storefront window of the city’s famous Geno’s Steaks. Meanwhile, native-born resentments flared in Philadelphia’s suburbs when Bridgeport, PA and Riverside, NJ, joined dozens of other nearby cities in considering local bans on illegal immigrants.³¹

Philadelphia’s long history of losing out to other cities as immigrants search for new homes persists and will likely continue well into the future. Yet with more and more immigrants making nearby suburbs their home amidst a new economy, and in an environment of legal uncertainty at the national level and anti-immigrant outbursts at the local, Philadelphia enters a context that, even for one of the oldest cities in the country, is thoroughly new.

³¹ Gaiutra Bauhudar, “Immigrants Send a Resounding Call,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 2, 2006; Bauhudar, “Genos Owner Draws Buzz – and Maybe a Bias Suit,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 2, 2006; Jeff Shields, “Borough Considers Ban on Illegals,” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Aug. 11, 2006.

APPENDICES

A. CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Percentage of the City of Philadelphia Foreign Born, Including Puerto Rican Born, 1900-2006

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1980	1990	2000	2006
Total FB in City	300,320	383,616	406,807	367,741	305,955	259,589	138,240	141,252	184,120	198
Total Pop. in City	1,289,780	1,550,304	1,820,473	1,939,503	1,927,990	2,121,360	1,697,340	1,577,804	1,513,445	1,448
Percentage Foreign Born	23.28%	24.74%	22.35%	18.96%	15.87%	12.24%	8.14%	8.95%	12.17%	13.7%

Percentage of the City of Philadelphia Foreign Born, Excluding Puerto Rican Born, 1900-2006

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1980	1990	2000	2006
FB Minus P.R. in City	300,320	383,616	406,605	367,438	305,755	257,357	113,360	111,385	142,977	164
Total Pop. in City	1,289,780	1,550,304	1,820,473	1,939,503	1,927,990	2,121,360	1,697,340	1,577,804	1,513,445	1,448
Percentage Foreign Born	23.28%	24.74%	22.34%	18.94%	15.86%	12.13%	6.68%	7.06%	9.45%	11.3%

Number and Percentage of FB by Country, City of Philadelphia, 1900-1930

	Number of FB by Country				Percentage of Total FB			
	1900	1910	1920	1930	1900	1910	1920	1930
Russia	28,339	90,072	85,277	82,820	9.44%	23.48%	20.96%	22.52%
Italy	24,111	44,136	68,420	67,367	8.03%	11.51%	16.82%	18.32%
Ireland*	95,080	82,440	61,961	49,187	31.66%	21.49%	15.23%	13.38%
Germany	71,399	60,408	40,070	34,239	23.77%	15.75%	9.85%	9.31%
Poland	7,231	2,088	30,565	31,411	2.41%	0.54%	7.51%	8.54%
England	40,691	33,768	31,089	24,038	13.55%	8.80%	7.64%	6.54%
Austria**	6,235	20,952	16,659	10,302	2.08%	5.46%	4.10%	2.80%
Hungary	3,615	12,528	11,804	9,191	1.20%	3.27%	2.90%	2.50%
Scotland	6,832	7,560	9,683	9,292	2.27%	1.97%	2.38%	2.53%

* Includes N. Ireland in 1930

** Includes entries for Austria-Hungary and Austria-Tyrol

Number and Percentage of FB by Country, City of Philadelphia, 1940-1950

	Number FB		Perc. of Total FB	
	1940	1950	1940	1950
USSR	76,106	54,997	24.87%	21.19%
Italy	59,696	51,537	19.51%	19.85%
Ireland	25,447	25,286	8.32%	9.74%
Northern Ireland	12,625	615	4.13%	0.24%
Poland	25,379	23,406	8.30%	9.02%
Germany	29,760	17,561	9.73%	6.76%
England	16,307	11,658	5.33%	4.49%
Austria	10,312	9,072	3.37%	3.49%
Scotland	8,978	7,934	2.93%	3.06%
Hungary	6,359	6,999	2.08%	2.70%

Number and Percentage of FB by Region/Country, City of Philadelphia, 1980-2006

	Number of FB by Country/Region			
	1980	1990	2000	2006
Eastern and Central Europe	29,520	21,154	23,770	22,577
Other Central America/ Spanish Speaking Carribean	3,180	3,277	11,619	20,646
East Asia	5,940	13,206	16,218	19,710
Southeast Asia	6,480	13,617	23,215	19,516
South Asia	2,740	4,992	8,949	14,726
Carribean (Not Spanish Speaking)	4,940	6,504	12,382	14,131
Western Europe	42,500	29,563	20,300	12,876
South America	2,680	4,832	7,789	9,351
Sub-Saharan Africa	1,540	2,117	6,579	8,762
Mexico	520	593	3,177	5,842
Middle East	1,940	2,101	2,480	4,995
Canada	2,020	1,339	1,312	2,851
Central Asia	260		638	2,174
North Africa	440	601	1,148	1,796
South Pacific	180	357	643	556
Born in Puerto Rico	24,880	29,867	41,143	34,557

	Percentage of Total FB			
	1980	1990	2000	2006
Eastern and Central Europe	21.35%	14.98%	12.91%	11.35%
Other Central America/ Spanish Speaking Carribean	2.30%	2.32%	6.31%	10.38%
East Asia	4.30%	9.35%	8.81%	9.91%
Southeast Asia	4.69%	9.64%	12.61%	9.81%
South Asia	1.98%	3.53%	4.86%	7.40%
Carribean (Not Spanish Speaking)	3.57%	4.60%	6.72%	7.10%
Western Europe	30.74%	20.93%	11.03%	6.47%
South America	1.94%	3.42%	4.23%	4.70%
Sub-Saharan Africa	1.11%	1.50%	3.57%	4.40%
Mexico	0.38%	0.42%	1.73%	2.94%
Middle East	1.40%	1.49%	1.35%	2.51%
Canada	1.46%	0.95%	0.71%	1.43%
Central Asia	0.19%		0.35%	1.09%
North Africa	0.32%	0.43%	0.62%	0.90%
South Pacific	0.13%	0.25%	0.35%	0.28%
Born in Puerto Rico	18.00%	21.14%	22.35%	17.37%

B. PHILADELPHIA METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREA (PMSA)

Percentage of PMSA Foreign Born, Including Puerto Rican Born, 1900-2006

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
Num. of Foreign Born	348,720	449,150	506,014	490,557	422,846	350,042	287,000	304,800	343,476	424,964	528,000
Total Pop. in PSMA	1,686,257	2,038,747	2,602,844	2,983,237	3,191,385	3,693,920	4,802,100	4,699,800	4,850,466	4,841,724	5,201,000
Percentage Foreign Born	20.68%	22.03%	19.44%	16.44%	13.25%	9.48%	5.98%	6.49%	7.08%	8.78%	10.15%

Percentage of PMSA Foreign Born, Excluding Puerto Rican Born, 1900-2006

	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
FB Minus P.R. in PMSA	348,720	449,150	505,711	490,153	422,446	347,234	263,600	265,800	294,529	360,692	471,000
Total Pop. in PSMA	1,686,257	2,038,747	2,602,844	2,983,237	3,191,385	3,693,920	4,802,100	4,699,800	4,850,466	4,841,724	5,201,000
Percentage Foreign Born	20.68%	22.03%	19.43%	16.43%	13.24%	9.40%	5.49%	5.66%	6.07%	7.45%	9.06%

Number and Percentage of FB by Country, PMSA, 1900-1930

	Number of FB by Country				Percentage of Total FB			
	1900	1910	1920	1930	1900	1910	1920	1930
Italy	27,073	55,598	88,405	96,859	7.76%	12.38%	17.47%	19.74%
Russia	29,583	94,321	90,830	90,193	8.48%	21.00%	17.95%	18.39%
Ireland*	113,828	102,133	78,112	64,135	32.64%	22.74%	15.44%	8.30%
Germany	80,657	69,206	51,677	47,268	23.13%	15.41%	10.21%	9.64%
Poland	8,020	2,516	43,083	43,834	2.30%	0.56%	8.51%	8.94%
England	48,237	41,421	41,176	39,996	13.83%	9.22%	8.14%	8.15%
Austria**	7,320	26,578	20,490	12,322	2.10%	5.85%	3.41%	2.29%
Hungary	3,606	15,037	14,026	11,211	1.03%	3.35%	2.77%	2.29%
Scotland	9,431	9,327	12,611	14,039	2.70%	2.08%	2.49%	2.86%

*Includes N. Ireland in 1930

**Includes entries for Austria-Hungary and Austria-Tyrol

Number and Percentage of FB by Country, PMSA, 1940-1950

	Number FB		Perc. of Total FB	
	1940	1950	1940	1950
Italy	89,002	78,220	21.05%	22.35%
Other USSR/Russia	82,512	62,408	19.51%	17.83%
Ireland	33,906	35,773	8.02%	10.22%
Northern Ireland	17,564	1,185	4.15%	0.34%
Poland	35,371	31,884	8.36%	9.11%
Germany	40,766	31,232	9.64%	8.92%
England	28,872	22,089	6.83%	6.31%
Scotland	13,952	12,609	3.30%	3.60%
Austria	14,100	12,555	3.33%	3.59%
Hungary	11,543	11,552	2.73%	3.30%

Number and Percentage of FB by Region/Country, PMSA, 1970-2006

Number of FB by Country/Region					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
Western Europe	142,900	115,600	92,860	73,944	64,409
South Asia	1,900	7,800	16,452	30,699	60,357
East Asia	6,300	17,700	37,838	41,582	60,122
Central and Eastern Europe	63,400	48,100	30,536	50,070	50,931
Southeast Asia	2,900	13,100	28,867	45,357	48,850
Central America (Not Mexico)/Spanish Speaking Carribean	5,000	8,800	15,941	25,723	43,052
Mexico	200	1,400	1,997	14,544	31,571
South America	4,100	6,500	11,177	14,154	25,894
Carribean (Not Spanish Speaking)	4,200	7,400	15,553	19,575	23,962
Sub-Saharan Africa	700	3,600	7,037	13,608	19,857
Middle East	3,700	6,200	5,809	13,815	10,445
Canada	12,200	7,700	8,113	9,611	10,153
Northern Africa	200	1,200	2,574	3,450	5,867
Central Asia		400		645	2,947
South Pacific	400	1,100	470	2,429	2,913
Born in Puerto Rico	23,400	39,000	48,947	64,272	57,626

Percentage of Total Foreign Born					
	1970	1980	1990	2000	2006
Western Europe	49.79%	37.93%	27.04%	17.40%	12.18%
South Asia	0.66%	2.56%	4.79%	7.22%	11.41%
East Asia	2.20%	5.81%	11.02%	9.78%	11.37%
Central and Eastern Europe	22.09%	15.78%	8.89%	11.78%	9.63%
Southeast Asia	1.01%	4.30%	8.40%	10.67%	9.24%
Central America (Not Mexico)/Spanish Speaking Carribean	1.74%	2.89%	4.64%	6.05%	8.14%
Mexico	0.07%	0.46%	0.58%	3.42%	5.97%
South America	1.43%	2.13%	3.25%	3.33%	4.90%
Carribean (Not Spanish Speaking)	1.46%	2.43%	4.53%	4.61%	4.53%
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.24%	1.18%	2.05%	3.20%	3.76%
Middle East	1.29%	2.03%	1.69%	3.25%	1.98%
Canada	4.25%	2.53%	2.36%	2.26%	1.92%
Northern Africa	0.07%	0.39%	0.75%	0.81%	1.11%
Central Asia		0.13%		0.15%	0.56%
South Pacific	0.14%	0.36%	0.14%	0.57%	0.55%
Born in Puerto Rico	8.15%	12.80%	14.25%	15.12%	10.90%

