

Pope Francis Celebrates Immigrants:

His Words Alive on Long Island



“As a son of an immigrant family, I am happy to be a guest in this country, which was largely built by such families.”

(White House speech, September 23, 2015)

Here’s How Immigrants are Building Long Island:

- Long Island immigrants make up 23% of the labor force, and are responsible for **20% of economic output**.
- LI immigrants **contributed \$10.6 billion in purchasing power to the local economy** in 2006, generated 82,00 LI jobs and paid \$2,305 **more in local taxes than they received in government services** such as education and health care.
- **Almost half of LI immigrants earn between \$80,000 and \$199,999.**
- While immigrant workers generally earn about a quarter less than their U.S.-born counterparts, **immigrants tend to have more working adults per family.**
- **Day laborers are less than 1% of the half-million immigrants** on LI, often **doing difficult work rejected by people born in the United States** such as landscaping, farm work and service-industry work including home-health aides or restaurant workers.
- **Immigrants own 23% of LI small businesses** (14,000 businesses out of 62,000), generating earnings of \$1.06 billion.
- **73% of LI immigrants own their own homes.**
- A 2011 study estimates that **undocumented immigrants pay taxes:**
 - \$2,000 per family in state and local taxes in NYS, the bulk of it in sales tax.
 - \$104 million in state personal income taxes, \$95 million in property taxes, and \$463 million in sales taxes

Sources: New Americans on Long Island: A Vital Fifth of the Economy, Fiscal Policy Institute, May 2015; New Americans on Long Island, Fiscal Policy Institute, 2011; Strengthening Long Island: The Economic Contributions of Immigrants to Nassau and Suffolk Counties, Adelphi University 2008, Long Island Wins, 2015

Pope Francis Celebrates Immigrants:

His Words Alive on Long Island



“Thousands of persons are led to travel north in search of a better life for themselves and for their loved ones, in search of greater opportunities. Is this not what we want for our own children? We must not be taken aback by their numbers, but rather view them as persons, seeing their faces and listening to their stories, trying to respond as best we can to their situation.”

(Address to Congress, September 24, 2015)

Here are the People who Traveled to Long Island

- 526,000 immigrants live on Long Island, making up **18% of the population**.
- Latinos are 41% of immigrants on LI. **The majority of Latinos on LI were born in the US.**
- It is estimated that **76,000 unauthorized [undocumented] immigrants live on LI.**
- **Unauthorized immigration, caused by US laws that make “legal” immigration very difficult, is on the decline** in NYS since its peak in 2004.
- **55% of LI immigrants are naturalized US citizens.**
- Over the past two years, **3,000 unaccompanied refugee children** from Central America have arrived on LI:
- **Their main reason for coming is to escape horrific drug and gang-related violence** (murders, rapes, kidnappings) in their homes countries, primarily Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala.
- Many of these refugee children are elementary school-aged kids -- some are as young as four years old, **seeking to be reunited with their families here in the US.**

Sources: New Americans on Long Island: A Vital Fifth of the Economy, Fiscal Policy Institute, May 2015; Long Island Wins, 2014

Pope Francis Celebrates Immigrants: His Words Alive on Long Island



“We live in a world ...which ... seeks to eliminate all differences and traditions in a superficial quest for unity. ... Many of you [immigrants came] to this country at great personal cost ... I ask you not to forget that, like those who came here before you, you bring many gifts to your new nation. You should never be ashamed of your traditions ...which ... you can bring to enrich the life of this American land.”

(Independence Mall Address, September 26, 2015)

Here is How Immigrants Fit into American and Long Island Culture

- Immigrants in the past were often pressured to discard or shed their cultures and “melt” into being “Americans” because many US-Born Americans feared they would never fit into our culture.
- **Belief that immigrants will not assimilate into American life is an old, unfounded fear.** On March 16, 1898, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts said “Italians, Russians, Poles, Hungarians, Greeks, and Asiatics” are people who “English-speaking people have never hitherto assimilated, and who are most alien to the great body of the people of the United States.” **All these groups are today fully assimilated.**
- Numerous studies have shown that the **children of today’s immigrants generally speak English** and one study found that **72% of third generation Hispanics (the grandchildren of immigrants) speak only English.**
- **One third of immigrants are naturalized citizens**, a major step toward assimilation. So many immigrants are applying for citizenship that the process is backlogged for years.
- Today, there is less pressure on immigrants to discard their cultures. **Long Island is a virtual “salad bowl” of diverse cultures** found in ethnic restaurants and other businesses, religious institutions, national festivals, parades and street fairs. Yet all these nationalities are proud Long Islanders and proud Americans.

Source: Some Common Fears and Facts about Immigrants in U.S. History ... and Today, Richard Koubek, PhD, LI Jobs with Justice, 2014