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### **“Sankofa Past, Present and Future” Immigration Patterns and Contributions of Immigrants to The U.S Economy**

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“Sankofa Past, present and future”  
IMMIGRATION PATTERNS AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF IMMIGRANTS  
TO THE U.S ECONOMY

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Presented at York College, New York  
during the New York African Studies Association (NYASA) Conference  
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## Abstract

Immigrants migrate to the United States for various reasons - legally and illegally. Some for purposes such as education, economic opportunities, political asylum, while others simply choose to migrate for a change of environment. Franzee (2018) discussed some myths and facts about immigrants and the overall impact of their contributions to the United States economy. Historically, the United States experienced major waves of immigration patterns from Africa and its diaspora. The contributions of Africa and its diaspora to the United States economy are often overlooked largely in part by Africans and the African diaspora itself. This research examines the current immigration patterns and policies under the “Trump Administration” and contributions of immigrants to the United States Economy. Some factors that may be affecting the assimilation of new immigrants such as language proficiency, national culture, assimilation into a new dominant group especially in recent light of crimes across many communities which are often based on historical biases in opinions about specific groups of racial and ethnic minorities will also be explored.

Subthemes: Black Studies; African Diaspora, Immigration patterns, Immigration, Sankofa, US Immigration.

### This Presentation:

- ▶ This research examines the current immigration patterns and policies under the “Trump Administration” and contributions of immigrants to the United States Economy.
- ▶ The presentation was part of the OER content and in class poll exercise for the presenter’s “Social Inequality in America” course while at the Sociology Department, Bronx Community College.

### Overall Research:

Some factors that may be affecting the assimilation of new immigrants such as language proficiency, national culture, assimilation into a new dominant group especially in recent light of crimes across many communities which are often based on historical biases in opinions about specific groups of racial and ethnic minorities will also be explored.

## US Migration / Immigration

- ▶ Historically, the US has experienced all types of migration patterns:
- ▶ Pilgrims – religious freedoms
- ▶ Forced migration of Africans – slavery
- ▶ Migration reasons - legally and illegally of many different people:
  - ▶ Education
  - ▶ Job opportunities
  - ▶ Fleeing political violence
  - ▶ Change of environment

## Immigration Laws

- ▶ Ever since the founding of the United States, immigration laws have been put in place, reformed, and dismantled. These laws reflected the needs of the time, but often represent political statements of peoples' perceptions, which have cycled back and forth from favorable to hostile.

## Current Immigration News

- ▶ "zero tolerance" policy to deter illegal immigration.
- ▶ Lots of talk about border control and wall
- ▶ Limiting number of immigrants – closing borders
- ▶ Deportation
- ▶ Imprisonment

## Immigrants and Contributions to the economy

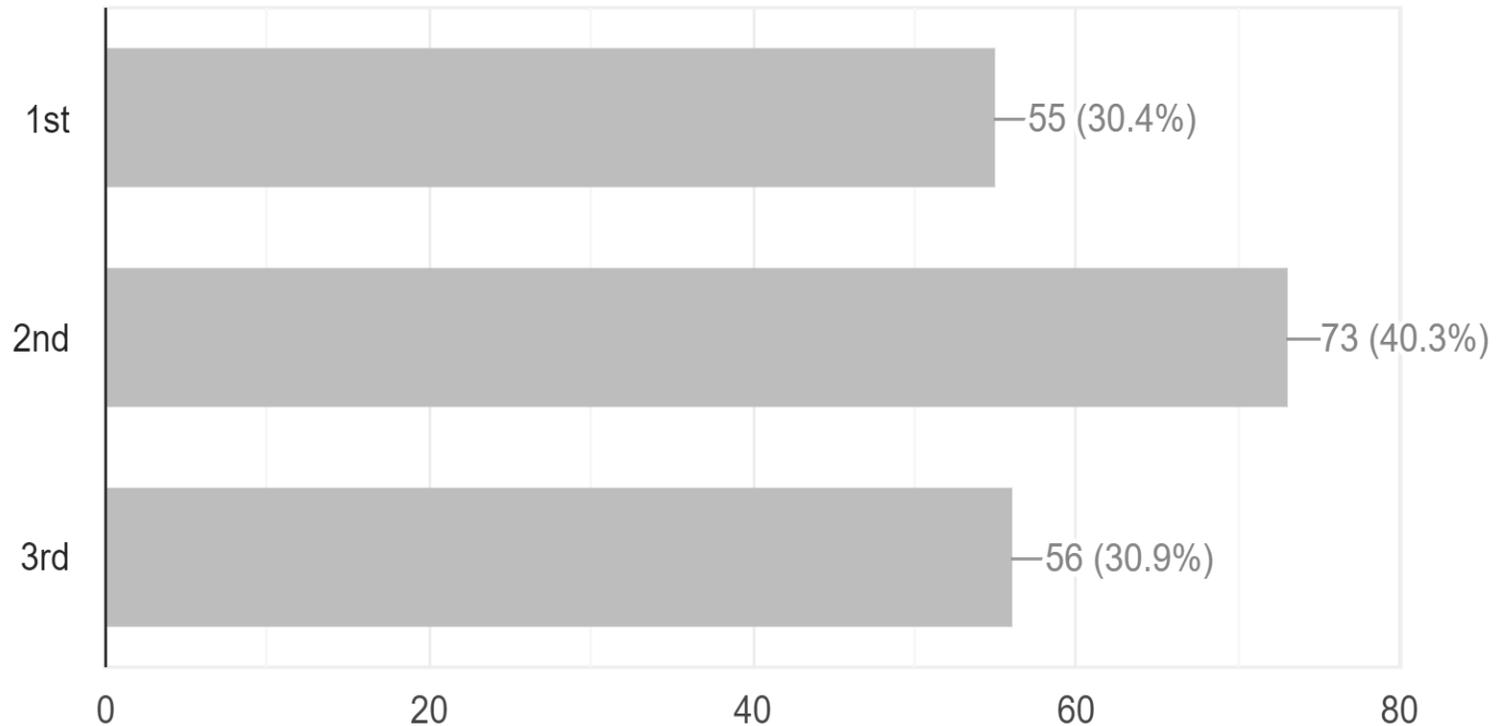
- ▶ Immigrants bring a wave of talent and creativity into our country.
- ▶ A 2011 survey of the top fifty venture capital funded companies found that half had at least one immigrant founder and three quarters had immigrants in top management or research positions.
- ▶ A significant share of advanced degrees awarded in science and engineering — often the foundation for innovation and job growth — go to foreign-born students with temporary visas studying in American universities.
- ▶ According to a 2012 National Science Board report, foreign students earned 27 percent of science and engineering master's degrees in 2009 (Effects of Immigration on the United States, n.d).
- ▶ In addition, Economic theory suggests a direct link between a skilled and innovative labor force and faster GDP growth, and more than three quarters of U.S. growth over the last 150 years can be explained by improvements in education and research-driven innovation (Effects of Immigration on the United States, n.d). This greater specialization leads to a more efficient distribution of labor, raising the incomes and productivity of both natives and immigrants.

## Immigration and upward mobility?

- ▶ Account for a “large share of US Labor growth; 51 percent between 1996 & 2002, despite only 14 percent of the labor force.” (Orrenius 2003).
- ▶ Strong driving factor in the US economy yet are vastly underrepresented and blamed for society's problems.
- ▶ Immigration has a negligible impact on native-born workers (Felbab-Brown 2017) .
- ▶ Immigration has been so important for growing our economy yet we are not taking care of our immigrants.
- ▶ Poverty rates from Latin American immigrants range between 20% and 30% and 40% to 60% are near poverty (cis.org).
- ▶ There's a clear disparity when compared with European and Asian immigrants whose rates range between 10% to 20%.
- ▶ 30% to 50% of Latin American immigrants do not have health insurance as opposed to sub 10% rates for European immigrants.
- ▶ All of these factors contribute to less upwards economic mobility for most immigrants.

## 5 - What generation of immigrant to the US are you (or your parents)?

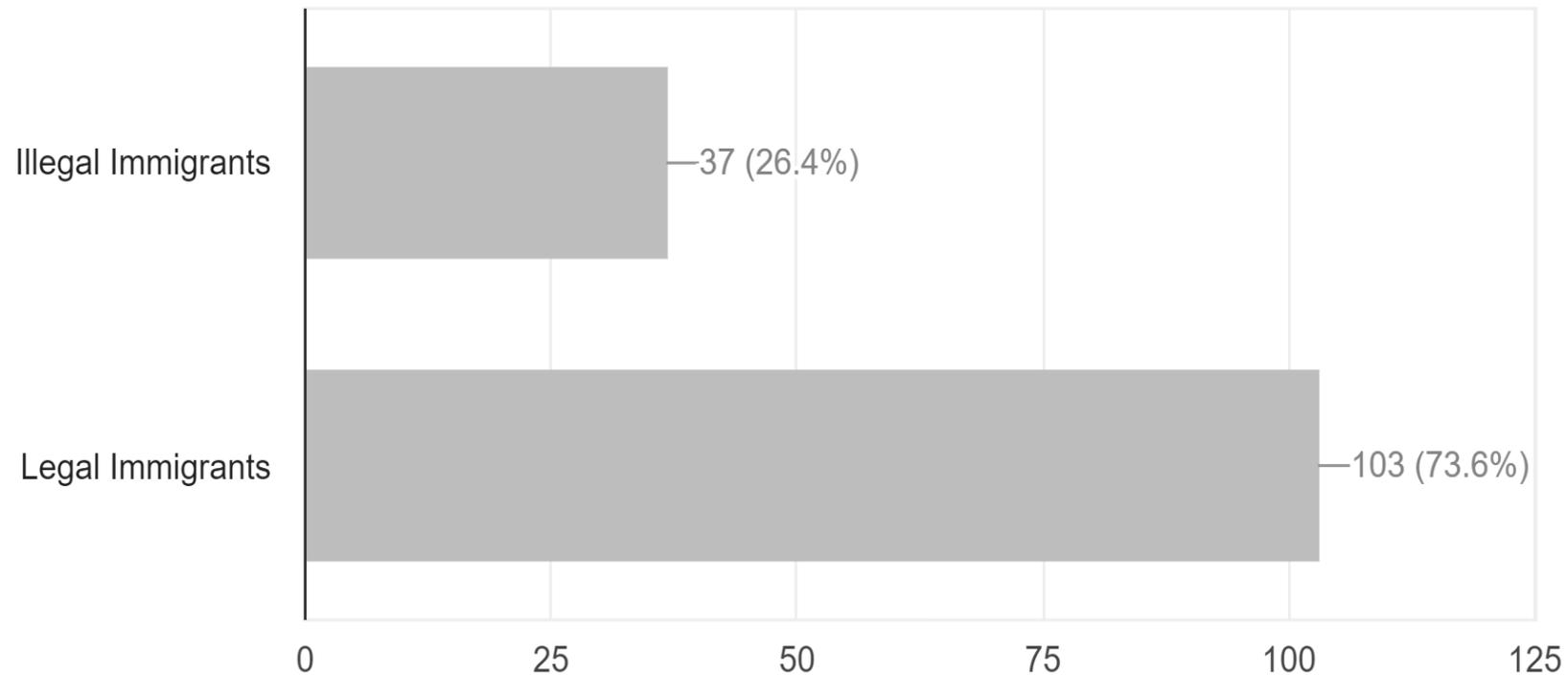
0 / 181 correct responses



Row 1: Yourself

## 15) In your opinion, what is the overall effect of immigration on the US economy?

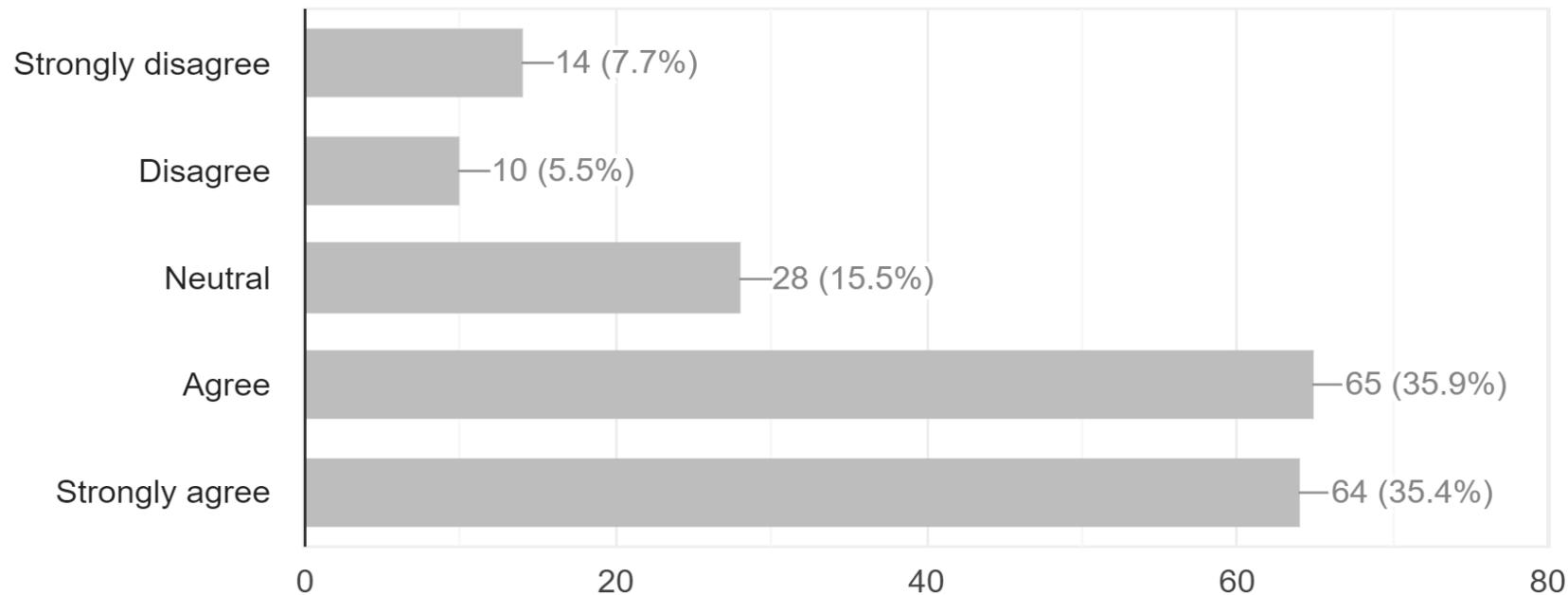
0 / 140 correct responses



Row 1: Much better

16) In a recent article published on Nov. 27, 2018 Gretchen Franzee discussed some myths and facts about ...Please rate the following statements

0 / 181 correct responses



Row 1: Immigration has an overall positive impact on the long-run economic growth in the U.S.

## Outcomes: Immigrants and US Economy

- ▶ Immigrants play an increasingly crucial role in the U.S. economy.
- ▶ Immigrant contributions are often overlooked, but they significantly benefit all Americans.
- ▶ Americans benefit from the taxes that immigrants pay and from the money they spend on services and consumer goods.
- ▶ Their participation in the economy generates a demand for goods and services, thereby increasing job growth.
- ▶ Immigrants pay the same taxes we all do, this includes: federal income tax, social security tax, Medicare tax, property tax, state income tax, sales tax (etc.).
- ▶ The taxes they pay help to cover federal and state services that benefit communities.

## Outcomes: US Economy and Undocumented Immigrants / Workers

- ▶ Undocumented immigrants make important contributions to the economy as well.
- ▶ If they had a pathway to secure legal status, they would likely earn more, therefore, more of their income would be on the books.
- ▶ Removal of undocumented workers would constitute as a major loss for the U.S economy.
- ▶ Certain industries that are more dependent on undocumented workers, such as construction, agriculture, leisure and hospitality, would be particularly affected in a negative way.
- ▶ The deletion of undocumented workers would lead to more job openings and fewer individuals to fill them.

## Outcome: Immigrants and Upward Mobility

- ▶ Although immigrants get more upward mobility in the US than they would find in their home countries, once they arrive they tend to plateau.
- ▶ The children of immigrants are expected to far outperform their parents.
- ▶ They benefit from knowing the native language, English, and having parents that understand the American labor system.
- ▶ However according to a journal article titled, Making It in America, research shows that the children of immigrants tend to not be as successful as their parents.
- ▶ It also shows that students who manage to escape poverty, only tend to earn an average wage, without much more mobility.

# Conclusion

- ▶ The impact of immigration on the economy can be perceived as positive as well as negative.
- ▶ In reality, immigrants are constantly marginalized in American society, regardless of social status, occupation, or gender.
- ▶ They are a driving force for the growth of the US economy, yet their contributions are more than often overlooked.
- ▶ Current Immigration laws may be overlooking the positive contributions of immigrants both documented and undocumented to the US economy.
- ▶ Americans and the US economy benefits from both legal and illegal immigrants in many ways than not.

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