

Digital Stories Based on Immigration Scenarios

Learning Community 15 Ethnic Studies 125 & English 101
Drs. Isabel Martinez & Tara Pauliny

Transnational Motherhood

Roles: Filipina nurse, early 40s; spouse; child; hospital administrator; U.S. politician opposed to scholarships and exchange programs

Group Members: Jennifer Johnson, Rhoni Ward, Yarely Barraza, Danielle Lopez

The United States has long relied on female nurses from the Philippines to fill in critical nursing shortages. Since after World War II, the United States has established nursing scholarships and visitor exchange programs, while the Philippine government established policies and agencies to facilitate the overseas migration of nurses. By 2000, approximately 60 to 75% of the foreign nursing workforce in the United States was Filipina women.

These Filipina nurses, however, leave spouses and families behind to care for the infirmed and elderly in the United States. Women go years without seeing their children and/or spouses, sometimes not seeing them for up to five years. These female nurses report anxiety about their marriages, as well as their children's development. Unable to obtain visas for their families, these nurses are often told that they may either stay in the United States and work or return to the Philippines to be with their families.

Same-Sex Immigration Rights

Roles: U.S.-born lesbian partner; Great Britain-born lesbian partner; politician in favor of DOMA to apply to immigration rights; politician against DOMA to apply to immigration rights

Group Members: Sophia Papapetru, Maylyn Bernabe, Gina Corsi, Genesis Cornielle

Imagine you have fallen in love and want to spend the rest of your life with a person from a foreign country. If you are a heterosexual American, your partner can gain permanent resident status, and eventually citizenship, by marrying you. But if you are gay or a lesbian, you cannot sponsor your partner for citizenship because federal marriage and immigration laws do not recognize same sex couples.

Due to the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), lesbian couples that include a non-citizen member are not entitled to the same immigration rights as heterosexual couples with one non-citizen member. Even if a same-sex lesbian couple is legally married and recognized in New York State, because DOMA is a federal law, if one of the members of the couple is an immigrant, she is unable to apply for a marriage visa like her female counterparts who are married to men, and she runs the risk of being deported. Without this protection, partners are left to only be with their partners on temporary, limited tourist visas, or if she is able to obtain one, on work visas.

West Indian Child-Care Workers

Roles: West Indian nanny; parent; child; domestic workers' rights activist; anti-immigration politician
Group Members: Dianna Serrano, Jessica Kang, Genesis Pantosin, Yazmin Gomez, Frank Riley

According to Census data, over the last three decades (1980, 1990, 2000), the percentage of employed West Indian women who are in the childcare occupation has increased in New York. In Brooklyn specifically, among West Indian women ages 16 and up, while the number of childcare workers was 980 in 1980, by 1990 they doubled at 1,752, and by 2000, their numbers had reached 7,007. By 2008, there were over 9,200 West Indian nannies in Brooklyn alone. These numbers, however, may be underestimates as many people working for cash may not be comfortable to report their true professions.

Conditions of their employment, however, vary from employer to employer. While some employers are respectful and considerate, others are criminally abusive. Some nannies are actually recruited from their home countries with the promise of being able to go to school and working in comfortable conditions, but once they arrive in the United States, they are forced to work many hours a day and night without seeing a paycheck. They are threatened with deportation, however, if they complain or attempt to leave.

To begin to address some of the issues facing nannies in New York, in 2010, the state legislature passed the Domestic Workers Bill of Rights which now guarantees nannies overtime pay, a minimum of three paid days off a year, legal protection from harassment and discrimination, and in general, recognizes nannies as legitimate wage-earners. Domestic workers rights activists, however, argue that much more needs to be done to protect these nannies and their rights.

Sex Trafficking

Roles: Sex worker; sex trafficker; sex trafficking activist
Group Members: Jesus Diaz, Michelle Bentancourt, Tamta Beriashvili

Estimates of sex trafficking victims range from a low 15,000 to a high of 800,000 victims smuggled into the United States each year. Women and minor children, promised legitimate work, are brought from Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia, Latin America and Africa to work as prostitutes in states and cities across the country. New York State is the leading destination for sex trafficking victims, with over 4,000 child sex trafficking victims and thousands more adult victims.

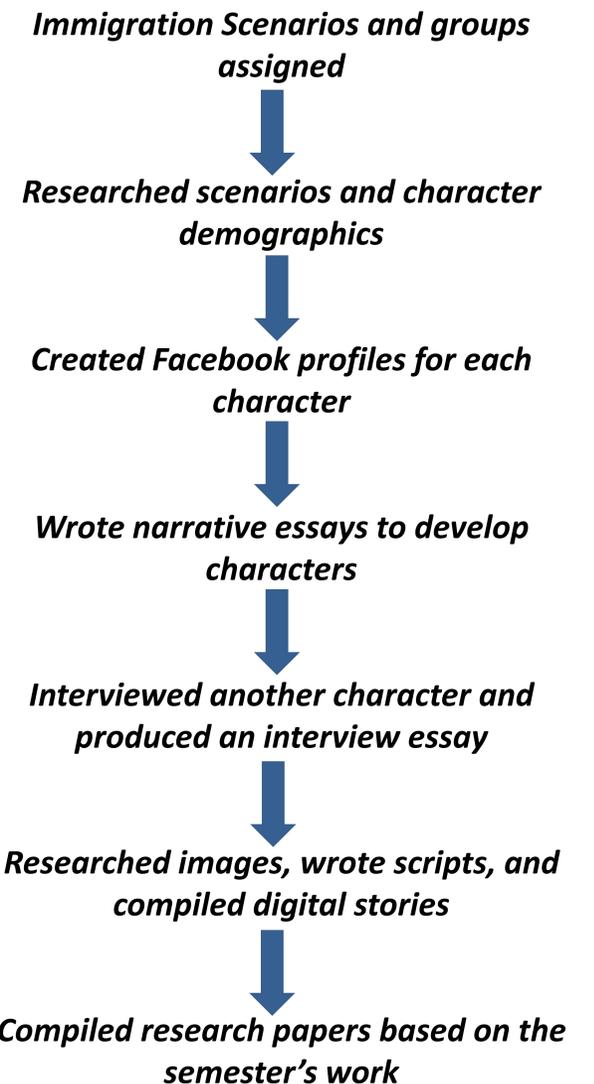
In many cases, sex trafficking victims are told that they must work to pay off the debts associated with their immigration, sometimes totaling between \$30,000 and \$60,000. They are often held against their will until the debts are paid off. However, it remains that few sex traffickers and sex trafficking crimes are ever prosecuted. It was only in 2008 that sex trafficking was deemed a criminal offense in New York, and between 2008 and 2010, only 25 arrests were made and only five were sentenced. In 2010, Brooklyn D.A. created a Sex Trafficking unit to focus only on these types of crimes.

Intergenerational Family Values/Elderly Immigrants

Role: Elderly immigrant woman; immigrant woman's daughter; immigrant woman's Granddaughter social worker specializing in elderly issues
Group Members: Danyeli Rodriguez, Jennifer Visconti, Alejandra Contreras, Kadesha Clarke-Herbert

The number of immigrants in the United States over the age of 65 nearly doubled between 1990 and 2007, from 2.7 to 4.5 million. Elderly women outnumber elderly men, with 59.4% women and 40.6% men. Older female immigrants have tended to report higher incidences of depression and loneliness due to language barriers, limited social networks, cultural differences and economic disadvantages. In addition, their children [and grandchildren] may have adopted new "American" ways of being, including changes in traditions, loss of language and ideas about being a woman/female. Upon immigration and assimilation in the United States, many women experience changes in attitudes about family roles, labor market participation, marriage, and sexuality. This may cause friction in the home, as older immigrants are more likely to reside with their families than elderly natives.

Semester-Long Project Overview



Digital Story Assignment

Create a five-minute digital presentation using images and music to represent your Immigration Scenario. Write a script, based on your essays, to read over the images.