

AMERICA'S STREETS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN PAVED WITH GOLD—RIGHT?

The most successful newcomers to this country are willing to lay the bricks themselves, but even then, there are potholes and, sometimes, dead ends. Historically, the unrivaled level of opportunity in the United States is or has been, in part, a function of the country's immigration policies, which have mirrored its economic needs. An immigrant who came with some capital and the capacity for hard work could grow a successful business. Those fleeing political or religious persecution found a relatively safe haven and democratic society. And those who sought an exceptional education could also find it. Now, in the 21st-century U.S., how much of this land of opportunity still exists?

Landing an *Can immigrants still live the American dream, or are they just dreaming?* Opportunity

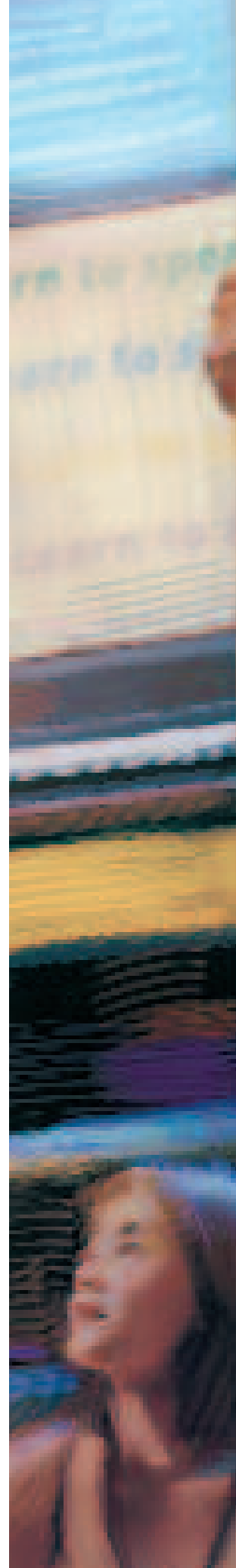
by Sheila Smith Noonan

Profit Motive

Between 1820 and 1920, about 35 million people came to the U.S., overwhelmingly from Europe. (In the decade that Pace University was founded, 1900–1910, there were eight million.) Those seeking refuge, such as Eastern European Jews and Armenians, found safety and freedom in their new land. Others, such as the Koreans, came as a source of cheap labor, and Africans were brought over as slaves. But the motivator for most immigrants was the perception of America being the land of opportunity. The poster child for the American dream was Andrew Carnegie, a Scottish immigrant who made his way from bobbin boy to industrial magnate to philanthropist.

Unfortunately, the majority of early 20th century immigrants did not have the same success as Carnegie, but they did have better opportunities than they did in their homelands. “U.S. immigration policy is often driven by its need for labor, and in the late 1800s and early 1900s, the country’s rapidly expanding industrial base needed exactly what many of these immigrants offered—plentiful, cheap labor,” says Amy Foerster, PhD, assistant professor of sociology at Pace. “Life was hard for them at the beginning, although people who came with certain skills—Jewish needleworkers, for example—fared better than those who came from agrarian backgrounds.”

For the same subset of immigrants today—those with little education—the opportunity prospects are considerably bleaker, believes Barbara Blumberg, PhD, profes-



Student Hits Home Run at Pace Pitch Contest

A bed that rises to the ceiling to save space. An SAT® video game. Electronic devices that look like plants. Seventeen contestants, including Pace students and faculty, presented these entrepreneurial ideas and more at the first-ever Pace Pitch contest in December. It was Rui Jin '06, a graduate student in international business, who won the \$1,000 grand prize with her idea for cultural immersions trips to China for students.

Jin was born in Beijing and was raised mostly in China. While at Pace, she found that, unlike her, many of her American-born Chinese friends had little knowledge of China and had some difficulties understanding the culture of their parents.

Once a leader of the debating team at Beijing University, Jin was able to keep her nervousness to a minimum during her pitch and gave the most energetic and persuasive pitch. "It was very exciting," says Jin about winning. "I was very proud that people had so much interest in my home country."

The contest was presented by the Entrepreneurship @ Lubin program in association with Pace Association for Collegiate Entrepreneurs (P.A.C.E.), Second Century Innovation and Ideas (SCI²), and the Small Business Development Center at Pace. It was financed by JPMorgan Chase.



Rui Jin '06

During Pace Pitch, each individual or team had three minutes to make a pitch, which had to be an original concept created by the presenter(s). The contest was open to all members of the Pace community as well as the general public. The pitches were presented to a panel of judges, including Emanuel

Martinez, managing director of GreenHills Ventures, LLC; Charles F. Ryan, vice president of small business financial services for JPMorgan Chase Bank; Carolyn Chin, CEO of Cebiz Social Ventures; Clarence B. Jones, executive consultant for Marks Paneth & Shron, LLP; Brian J. Nickerson, PhD, director of the Edwin G. Michaelian Institute for Public Policy and Management at Pace; and Jerald Posman, director of Project Enterprise at Pace.

Says Bruce Bachenheimer, PhD, clinical professor of management, "Pace's motto is *Opportunitas*, and I don't think there's anything more synonymous with opportunity than entrepreneurship. And there's nothing more important in teaching entrepreneurship than experiential learning, and this is experiential learning."

While Jin's pitch remains unfunded, Nickerson offered her the chance to coordinate a trip to three cities in China this summer for a group of Pace faculty members and students. The trip was "not for profit, not for credit, but for fun," says Jin.

of history. "The industrial base is much different in the 21st century, and the immigrants the U.S. wants to attract are those who are highly educated or possess certain skills. For example, nurses from the Dominican Republic and the Philippines help ease our nursing shortage," says Blumberg. "The jobs for the unskilled workers coming today are for the most part low-paying, service sector positions."

In addition to filling labor needs, one major avenue for immigrants' financial success has been small business. The immigrant street peddlers of yesteryear have evolved into a plethora of small business owners, many of them doing quite well. Koreans, for example, are twice as likely as native-born Americans to own a small business; they own about 20 percent of all U.S. dry cleaning businesses and, in Southern California, nearly half of all liquor stores and one-hour photo shops. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, the gross sales of Korean-American businesses totaled about \$46 billion.

The Bush administration's current policy toward this

labor segment is favorable to small business owners, including immigrants. "Small business is very important to this president," says Bruce Bachenheimer, PhD, clinical professor of management. "One of [George W. Bush's] first executive orders was that government agencies should not make any regulations that place a burden on small businesses."

Even 100 years ago, immigrants realized that a college education was essential for upward mobility in American society—often not for themselves, but for their children.

Many immigrants that are small business owners are also potential entrepreneurs. Bachenheimer contends that entrepreneurs possess certain personal characteristics, including a need for achievement, self-direction, and the ability to accept risks to succeed. Certainly, moving to a new country simply indicates an acceptance of risk, but the

goal-oriented "model minority" immigrants are the ones who use these characteristics to their advantage. "For America to be the land of opportunity, you have to create your own opportunity," he says.

While some U.S. immigrants today are doing well financially, others are not. According to a U.S. Census Bureau report on the foreign born, in 2002, 16.1 percent lived below the poverty level, compared with 11.1 percent of native born.

Suffrage, and More

A hallmark of American democracy is the right to vote. Historically, the right was limited for some immigrants, and even when it became available, certain newcomers distanced themselves

from the ballot box. In the aftermath of the 2000 election, however, there is a growing interest among immigrant communities to participate in the electoral process.

Until the voting reforms of the 1880s, immigrants essentially were disenfranchised from the electoral process, says Christopher Malone, PhD, assistant professor of political science. "The government didn't run the elections—political parties did, giving rise to corrupt political machines," he says. "The constraints of the process—voting registration was limited to working hours and required filling out lengthy forms—kept many immigrants from voting. The message was, 'Come to America, work hard, but don't participate, electorally speaking.'"

Today, however, immigrants are relatively well positioned to flex their political muscle—if they so choose. According to a report by the American Immigration Law Foundation, 5.4 million new adult American citizens voted in 2000, and once an immigrant is registered to vote, he or she is more likely to vote than native voters. However, numerous obstacles stymie the potential power of this voting block. Many immigrants resist becoming U.S. citizens because of what Foerster calls "the myth of return." The ability to hold dual citizenship

“Ironically, for a nation of immigrants, the issues that immigration presents are often...controversial.”

— Barbara Blumberg, PhD

goes a long way to bolstering an immigrant's interest in U.S. citizenship, but even then, if the person is more concerned with homeland politics than American, he or she might not vote. Despite laws and political promises, language barriers and even intimidation at the polls still exist. Immigrants might be eager to vote, but cannot because of the often drawn-out process of obtaining citizenship.

Voting is not the only interest some immigrants have shown in the political process. Take Swati Dandekar, for instance, who came to the U.S. from India in 1973. First an active community volunteer, she went on to run for the local school board, and from there, has been elected twice to the Iowa House of Representatives. In 2004, Dandekar led Senator John Kerry's campaign in the Hawkeye State. Breaking through to mainstream voters is still a tremendous feat, but one that Malone expects will be more common for future foreign-born or second-generation Americans.

The Lure of Learning

Take away the glaring differences of American classrooms a century apart, and the primary and secondary U.S. educational system offers immigrant children the same key perks: learning a different culture and, often, a new language. By being proficient at both, the children's opportunities surpass those of the foreign-born adults in their lives who cling to “old ways” and speak little English.

Even 100 years ago, immigrants realized that a college education was essential for upward mobility in American society—often not for themselves, but for their children. While many parents made personal sacrifices, there were other avenues. The City University of New York offered a free college education to students who graduated from New York high schools. “First- and second-generation immigrants took full

advantage of that offer,” says Blumberg. “At City College in 1915, for example, about two-thirds of the student body was comprised of Eastern European Jews.”

A college education remains a cornerstone of the American dream for immigrants. “Education still plays a role for children of recent immigrants, but not as cheaply as in the past,” says Blumberg. For many, it is the reason they left their homeland. Colleges in the U.S. often have highly specialized courses of study not available in the homeland, or there may be better job opportunities for U.S.-educated graduates once they return home.

And yet, the number of international students attending American colleges has dropped. The

9/11 America, with the Patriot Act and other regulations, it might be more difficult now for international students who feel they are under the pallor of suspicion. However, it is much too early to definitively say what is behind the decrease.”

Waking up from the Dream?

America offers immigrants many other opportunities. One of the country's most powerful appeals to foreigners is family reunification. And yet, there is a division in this country over which opportunities should be offered to newcomers. Should high school graduates whose foreign-born parents are not citizens be entitled to Pell Grants, enabling them to afford a college education? President Bush's proposed Guest Worker Program walks a fine political line, but it may do

Institute for American Irish Studies Launched

Looking to highlight the rich history of the Irish in the United States, Pace University established an Institute for American Irish Studies in May. The University also intends the institute to be a first step in creating a broader move towards migration and immigration studies.

Serving as the institute's executive director will be Christopher Cahill, editor in chief of *The Recorder*, the journal of the American Irish Historical Society.

“Pace's integral involvement in New York City and Westchester County life makes it the ideal place for establishing the Institute for American Irish Studies,” says Cahill. “Pace's exciting scholarly resources will advance the work of the Institute as well as collaborative work in other fields.”

Pace currently offers courses in various areas addressing immigration and migratory issues, including American Diversity:

Immigration, Ethnicity and Race, Global Culture and Local Identities, and Ethnic and Racial Minorities. The new institute will serve as a prototype for expanded multidisciplinary learning.

Says President David A. Caputo, “Aside from helping to establish Pace as an international center for teaching and research in the field of American-Irish studies, the institute will connect the University with the sizable American-Irish community in the greater New York metropolitan area, Westchester, and beyond.”

The institute will be located on Pace's Midtown campus and will work closely with the provost, faculty members, and students on Pace campuses in downtown New York City and Westchester County.



Christopher Cahill

Photo courtesy of Christopher Cahill

Institute of International Education's “Open Doors 2004” report documented a 2.4 percent decrease in international students in the 2003–04 academic year, the first substantial decline in more than 30 years. Undergraduate enrollments actually went down five percent, but were offset by a 2.4 percent increase in graduate enrollments. At Pace, the international enrollment has gone down by 18 percent from fall 2002 to spring 2004, and the University's *Strategic Plan* calls for reversing that trend by about five percent a year through 2008. It is not immediately clear what is behind the decrease, either locally or nationally. Says Foerster, “It could be an anomaly, but in a post-

so at the expense of jobs for native-born Americans. And homeland security concerns may trump the ability of illegal immigrants to have employment opportunities that require a driver's license.

“Ironically, for a nation of immigrants, the issues that immigration presents are often cloudy, complex, and controversial,” says Blumberg. “America still affords its newcomers a variety of opportunities, but the myth of rags-to-riches to all who step on her soil is just that.” ■

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