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### **Immigration**

Coming to this country is sought out as a golden opportunity and a dream to many. Many of us are immigrants. Our parents, our neighbors, and friends. I believe that immigrants are the foundation of this country. A country that has been overshadowed with racism and prejudice. Most immigrants come to this country to find a better life or give a better life to their kids. Coming to a new country comes with a lot of struggles and that is the focus of this speech. Somethings I want to point out today are that immigrants go through so much and the struggles are adjusting to the new lifestyle, dealing with the language barrier as a foreign speaker, finding a job, struggling financially and most importantly discrimination. I know some of you know what I am talking about and some of you may relate to one or all of the main issues that I am going to be addressing.

There are so many ways the people come to this country either if it is legally or illegally. Coming to the US legally is a big process, something I went through. There is a lot of paperwork involved, of course and you also have to get a lot of vaccines and let's not forget the amount of money that goes into it because it is an expensive process. According to DoughRoller, "if we are up all the various fees required to come to the US and obtain citizenship, the total falls somewhere between \$4000 and \$11,300. Most people end up spending between \$6000 and \$8000." When we see how much it goes into it, we kind of see why so many people come here

illegally. And I am not saying that coming here illegally is right because it is not but most of these immigrants come here to have a better life and give one to their children because they are struggling in their own country. They do not want to see their kids going through the same thing that they went through, even if that means taking the risk of crossing the border. When they cross the border or sometimes borders, some die or get left behind and even only one or two make it.

Now let's talk about when we finally get here. They have to adjust to this new lifestyle that is going to be theirs for as long as it lasts even if that means months, years or the rest of their lives. Depending on where you end up living you have to adjust to your area because all around the United States is different. We all come from all around the world and the population of immigrants is diverse. Most immigrants come from Mexico, China and India. And the top three states where they end up residing in our California, Texas and Florida, following New York at last. But when I say adjusting into a new lifestyle, I am talking about the time difference, the weather, the food, and the ambience of the areas they reside in. Some areas have a lot of violence and lastly the language barrier, which I will be talking about in a second.

Coming from a different country and moving to a new one is clearly tough, something I can deeply relate to coming at the age of eight years old and having to learn a new language other than my native one. This one is tough for anyone coming here. I remember I would cry at school because the teacher wanted me to read a sentence in English and I just did not know how to say the words correctly. I learned English in less than a year but I was so afraid to speak it because I did not want my classmates or others to make fun of me and to this day that bit of insecurity still lingers in me because of my accent but that is something that I should and we all should be proud of. Learning a new language is not that simple. And the older you are it's harder than a little kid because kids are like sponges and their curiosity feeds into that as well. It's harder to learn a

different language and speak it fluently because their minds are over saturated with what they are already accustomed to, thus making it harder. According to Michelangelo Landgrave, “even if humans are equally able to learn a language at any age, younger immigrants would still have a greater incentive to learn.” And depending on your language background it could be easier or harder. Even though the United States does not have an official language it is important that we try to learn how to speak English.

When settling to a new country, the first thing we all try to do is find a job so we could make ends meet and support ourselves and of course our family. But finding a job can be hard sometimes especially if you know little to no English or you are undocumented. According to The Quinn Law Firm, “Many work in low-paying or dangerous occupations, such as domestic work, construction, agriculture and food service.” And being undocumented, employers take advantage of this and make them work a lot of hours and not even pay them as much and these immigrants do it because they do it for their family. And some of you in the room might know someone that has done this or yourself as well. All they want to do is support their family no matter the cost. And if they try to say anything about it, they risk their chance of the employer reporting them to immigration authorities. Now for most of the people that come here lawfully, some of you might have some kind of degree in your own country. This degree can be in the medical field or a lawyer or an engineer and you come here and you have to start from scratch because in this country the years of hard work and dedication you put in a degree in another country is valued the same as a regular piece of paper here. I know parents that struggle financially and I have seen my dad struggle as well. We are given this golden opportunity to live a good life but even the minimum wage is not a livable wage so we are just working to survive and not actually live.

We all face some kind of discrimination and this is not just for immigrants but for being in a minority group or class. Discrimination is no joke and it is hard for us the people of color and it is difficult to be accepted in this country. Discrimination in work places is really big. You probably would not get hired because of the color of your skin or because you do not know that much English. We have seen so many videos in the media of people mostly, white, telling us immigrants to go back to our country and I have had this happen to me. I remember it was my first year of high school and this kid in my science class told me, "go back to your country, you immigrant." And that was the first time, I have experienced discrimination and it left me powerless. I did not know what to say or do, I just did not say anything to him. Sometimes in situations like this, you do not know what to do, especially if you are a kid. For kids it is really hard because they do not understand why they are being made fun of or judged. Some of you have experienced verbal attacks and probably physical attacks. It bothers these Americans that we come here and are minding our business and here they come and it bothers them that we are speaking our native language and get all aggressive. If you see anyone experiencing this, please stand up for them because some feel powerless like I did no matter the age. Please say something, do not be a bystander.

We come here for a better future for us and our kids. We do not take no one's job, some of us work the jobs that you Americans do not want to work. We try our best to make it each day. We hope that our little kids get to make a change and be anything they want to be. We want to give a life to our kids and family, a life that they could never have back in our country and that is why we come here. We have to support each other and be there when the other one needs up.

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