

## **My School: An International Experience**

*Ilba S. Castro*

Michael E. DeBakey High School for the Health Professions

### **INTRODUCTION**

I think that I am one of those people that were born to travel and enjoy learning about other cultures and getting involved with diversity. When I recall those years at elementary, middle, and high school in my home country of Colombia, the geography, history, English, and French classes always come to my mind, as well as the good grades I used to get in those subjects. I can say that in the geography and history classes I traveled without taking a plane or bus and imagined being a British, American, or French girl. I also thought how it would be for a Latina like me to adjust to a lifestyle that I just had seen in the movies or TV programs. I used to dream of walking on the streets, rushing to take the metro to go to work and doing many things that I knew existed in other countries.

When I was about six, I lived with my parents in a rented apartment on the third floor of my godmother's house. The house had a really big patio from where I had a wonderful view of the surroundings. I remember that my favorite spot was the west side of the patio where I could see the market place and a big park. What I liked the most was the yellow dome of a church that jutted out and captured my attention. All the children used to dream and imagine, and I was no exception, so I imagined that the yellow dome was the United States of America and that it was hard to get there but not impossible. The feeling that in the future I was going to travel to the U.S. never left my heart. Always when my parents and I went out, I paid careful attention to the places we passed by. What a pity! We never passed by that church, and I never knew where it was located.

One year later we moved to another apartment, and I never thought of that anymore because I learned more things at school that made me broaden my plans and give shape to my dreams.

When high school was almost over, and after thinking about what would be the best option for me, I decided that to be a journalist would not satisfy my wishes. With a teacher's help and a sudden love for English and French, I then decided to study languages. The next four years were hard for me, trying to catch up in the English classes, feeling frustrated because I failed English I the first semester, but after all I learned that inside I had an outstanding strength that got better semester by semester and made me a good professional. After the first months of being a university student, I decided to enjoy what the three languages I was learning at the same time at the age of twenty offered me: grammar, phonetics, vocabulary, reading, writing, and, most of all, culture.

When I was in the 7<sup>th</sup> semester, my French teacher organized an educational trip to France, so I traveled with some of my classmates and teachers. It was awesome. I finally was making one of my dreams come true: I was traveling abroad, ready to practice what I had learned about language, people, and culture. The experience was rewarding in many aspects, and as my language level improved, I made some friends, I became more open-minded after traveling, and I did not have to take the last French course. Indeed, I was chosen as a tutor in the "Alianza Francesa" in my hometown. Since I liked the experience, I made plans for my future and started looking for fellowships that would help me travel again, but this time as a teacher. Life, however,

brought me here to the United States of America, a place where I have found all what I always wanted to have, a place of all and for all.

I have to say that although the experience of being an immigrant is for many people a hard experience, for my husband and me (both of us from Colombia), it has been a very enjoyable experience. We have been living in this country for three years now, and since the very first day, every single thing has worked so well for us. Sometimes when we look back, we enjoy once again all the experiences we lived in the past and, of course, the ones that we live every day with our students at school. It is priceless how much we have learned from our students, from our friends, and from our schools themselves. The richness of our everyday life is infinite. As I mentioned above, we both are language teachers, and we brought our teaching experiences in our home country with us, which was of great help and gave us a very good start. Nevertheless, things are quite different here, and we had to learn a new system, but our attitude towards the new situations has been always positive. To sum up, being an immigrant in the United States is one of our best experiences ever, and, needless to say, we feel this country our home, too.

### **UNIT BACKGROUND**

I plan to take advantage of the cultural diversity that my work place offers. According to school statistics, students from 54 different cultures and different ethnicities attend the high school where I teach, the Michael E. DeBakey High School for Health Professions. I have had 21 of those in my classes. This curriculum unit will take approximately 3 or 4 weeks to implement and will include research about the different groups that I have in my classes, as well as the sharing of personal knowledge and experiences. Students will first talk about their personal experiences and what they know and have learned about their cultures through their families. They will share with the class the way they preserve the traditions and explain how their families celebrate traditions, why those traditions are important for them, and how they think these traditions influence American culture. Also, they will tell the class how they think they are different from their parents and what their generation has received from other cultures. Students will have the opportunity to dress up and bring all the artifacts and music that they consider necessary to make a presentation from a teenagers' point of view. It is important to mention that students will be grouped by countries, not by ethnicity. After the presentations we will start designing and sending invitations and a questionnaire for the parents that accept to come to the class to answer the kids' questions. Among others, parents can tell us the same things the students developed in their presentations but from the adults' point of view. They can also dress up and bring any objects they think will help them to present and answer the students' questions. Some of the parents probably were born in different countries and became U.S. citizens, so they can tell us exactly their perception about how life is over there and how it is in here.

After all the presentations, we will organize our international fair. We will need to send invitations to the students in other classes different from mine, design the stands, and decide what kinds of food, literature, clothes and art to bring to the fair. We will need also to coordinate with parents the time and place they need to be at school for the presentation and confirm their attendance. We will follow a program that will include a welcome from the students, from me, and from the principal, as well as the exhibitions and gratitude for attendance.

### **UNIT OBJECTIVES**

This curriculum unit seeks to accomplish several goals:

First of all, I wish to make the students of my school aware of the diversity that the school itself offers them. Many of the students do not notice the cultural variety they have at school until it is time for the Talent Show when some of their classmates dance typical dances from the

countries where they or their parents were born. This is an excellent opportunity for them to recognize the great opportunity that they have to enrich their cultural knowledge.

Second, the students will have the chance to share their culture in a very open environment as well as learn in a deeper way about others' cultures. This curriculum unit will be "an excuse" for the students to open their minds to new points of view and learn about others' traditions and customs.

Third, the students will clarify any doubts they may have about stereotypes.

Fourth, parents and students will find a moment to work as a team as well as a family, and enjoy an activity together, different from the ones they usually share at home or on weekends.

## **OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTRIES AND THEIR IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES**

### **Vietnam**

Vietnam is a strip of land shaped like the letter "S" that lies on the eastern part of the Indochinese peninsula. China borders it to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the West, the South China Sea to the east, and the Pacific Ocean to the east and South ("The Socialist Republic of Vietnam"). Vietnam is slightly larger than New Mexico.

The country's total length from north to south is 1,650 km. Its width, stretching from east to west, is 600 km at the widest point in the north, 400 km in the south, and 50 km at the narrowest part, in the center, in Quang Binh Province. Vietnam has a population of 80,902,400 inhabitants, and its capital is Hanoi ("The Socialist Republic of Vietnam").

Vietnam has had nine official names. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam was the name given by President Ho Chi Minh in September 2, 1945. Following the defeat of Southern Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the entire country of Vietnam was unified. In the first meeting of the National Assembly of the Unified Vietnam on July 2, 1976, the assembly decided to name the country The Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The constitutions of 1980 and 1992 continued its affirmation of the country's official name, legally and actually.

Vietnamese came to America due to the imposition of communism. The first wave of immigration occurred right after the fall of Saigon, nowadays known as Ho Chi Minh City, which is the largest city. Thousands of people were evacuated by helicopter from the roof of the U.S. embassy. Approximately 130,000 people were taken as refugees, educated anti-communist and US-friendly (Houle 16). An act was passed in the U.S. Congress establishing programs for resettlement. For those that could not come, the situation was rough because many were tortured and killed, and thousands of people suffered under a corrupt government. The first wave of immigrants adjusted well to the American system since they were educated and urbanized, but the second wave did not because of their lack of education which made them face a very different situation. In addition, they faced some hostility and rejection by the American citizens based on race and poverty; those situations occurred mainly in California and the north-east of the country. One of the remarkable changes Vietnamese people suffered was the new role of women. Many of them had to enter the labor market, affecting the family bases and making men feel very frustrated, but women felt free and productive. Many Vietnamese women started out doing nails; they did that so well and at such a good price that it became normal to have nails done, and it did not have to be for a special occasion or something exclusive for rich ladies. Nowadays doing nails is a huge Vietnamese business.

### **India**

The subcontinent of India is located in south Asia, between Pakistan, China and Nepal. To the north it is bordered by the world's highest mountain chain, where foothill valleys cover the

northernmost of the country's 26 states. Further south, plateaus, tropical rain forests, and sandy deserts are bordered by palm fringed beaches. The Indus and Ganges are the most representative rivers of India. Its total land area is 2,973,790 square kilometers. Its coastline is 7,000 kilometers (*Tour India*).

India has a population of 1,095,351,995 inhabitants which is approximately 15% of the world's population and its capital is New Delhi. The country has two names, the conventional long form is Republic of India and the conventional short form is India (*Tour India*).

Hindi is the official language but English is the most important language for national, political, and commercial communication. There are 14 more official languages in India: Bengali, Telugu, Marathi, Tamil, Urdu, Gujarati, Malayalam, Kannada, Oriya, Punjabi, Assamese, Kashmiri, Sindhi, and Sanskrit; Hindustani is a popular variant of Hindi/Urdu spoken widely throughout northern India but is not an official language (*Tour India*).

### ***Indian Immigration***

According to Ingram and Girod, immigration quotas were lifted in 1965 for India; as a consequence many well-educated and trained Indians have played an important role in the different aspects of the American life. Nowadays, the Indian population is known as the fastest immigrant group to grow and the third largest Asian group behind Chinese and Filipino Americans. Due to that growth, Indian Americans have become very successful in both the professional and economical field as well as socially. They are outstanding small business owners, high-tech engineers, managers of major corporations, physicians, hotel owners and technology entrepreneurs.

The history of immigrations for this ethnic group is very similar to that for others but the fact of speaking English very fluently has made easier for Indians to adjust to the American life. Another important point is that Indians are very educated; two-thirds of Indians hold a M.A., PhD, or a Bachelor's degree.

The British influence in India dates back to the 15<sup>th</sup> century. English became the main language as it is in the United States since by that time both countries were colonial possessions of Great Britain. In the long run that became an advantage for the future Indian generations that did not have to overcome the language barrier and put them a step ahead of other immigrant groups.

But not everything was rosy; in fact some dark episodes in the Indian history under the British rule drove people to emigrate. At the beginning the relations between Indians and the British were very friendly, but as time passed and India realized that the intentions of the British were not good, conflict started and led to bloody battles and both parties committed brutal acts. Indians were really disappointed with the insulting attitude of the British towards their culture and they became opposed to the imposition of social reforms, western laws and most of all Christianity.

### **The First Wave**

The states of Washington and Oregon and western Canada became the areas to settle for the first Indian immigrants who came to the United States fleeing famines and poverty that spread across the country by late nineteenth century. These were caused by the British exporting all the Indian grain to supply England. Many workers were needed to finish the railroad network developed by that time in the U.S. The first wave took ten years, from 1904 to 1914 when the U.S. government decided to stop it, and eventually Canada did the same. Canada sent Indian people to California where they had a very difficult time trying to enter the United States at the Angel Station in San Francisco Bay (the equivalent of Ellis Island in New York City) where

things were very rudimentary. One of the most difficult things was to prove they were not Chinese citizens (Ingram and Girod).

Once in the country Indians had to face more challenges, such as racist discrimination from white Americans. Many employers preferred Indians over Americans since Indians worked for less and were considered harder workers than Americans. That situation had a dramatic consequence when whites attacked Indians in a very violent way and obliged them to leave their neighborhoods: some were sent to prison and many of them migrated to Canada. A negative consequence for Indians after losing their jobs was that they had to become agricultural workers, so they could not settle in one place but had to migrate to different places according to the season. But many found agriculture very beneficial for them as they started to own land.

### The Second Wave

India became independent in 1947 and with that the relations with the United States changed. By 1948, new legislation allowed aliens to own land, and by 1952 the immigration of people with engineering, scientific, and medical skills was encouraged through the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952.

This second wave of immigrants did not isolate themselves but were proud to show their culture due to the amount of immigrants coming. Women wore their traditional clothes, their native languages were spoken among them with no fear and even attendance to their own religious temples and services were completely normal (Ingram and Girod).

### **The Chinese**

China is the third largest country in the world, behind Russia and Canada. China is located in Eastern Asia, and due to its size, China borders Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Hong Kong, India, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Macau, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Vietnam (*China Geography*).

The population of China is over 1.2 billion people. This is about one-fifth of the world's population. Again, due to its size, China is a very diverse land including deserts, mountains and fertile river. The Himalaya is the most representative mountain in China. Rivers play a major role in China both for transportation and for irrigation (*China Geography*).

The Great Wall of China is another of the great Chinese icons. It was built over 2,500 years ago. Once over 6,000 miles long, the wall is now about 3,750 miles long (*China Geography*).

### ***Chinese Immigration***

In *Chinese Americans* Michael Martin states that war was the main reason that contributed to immigration from China between 1850s through 1860s. The Taipeng Revolution took millions of lives and the revenge of the government for such actions brought horror and death to the Chinese. Chinese people were threatened to stop from leaving their country by the government, but the death penalty--probably they would be beheaded--was the last thing they worried about, and to the contrary Chinese men--most of them young married men--did all what they could to migrate to the United States.

Rumors about a gold rush in California made Chinese men dream of migrating to the United States to make a fortune and then return to China and retire as wealthy men.

The trip to the United States was full of disadvantages. Due to the lack of resources, illnesses, and crowds on the ships, some of Chinese men died trying to reach their final destination. On the way to the United States many Chinese met British and Spanish agents that tried to convince them to work in their colonial possessions. Those Chinese that accepted these invitations were

tricked and treated like slaves. Some others that refused to sign the contract were kidnapped and treated worse.

### ***The Yellow Peril***

No other immigrant group was treated in such a bad way as the Chinese immigrants. Violence and discrimination against them were out of proportion. White men were the tyrants that made Chinese immigrants' lives miserable. Many aspects led to the different kinds of situations that Chinese men had to face, such as the 1870s economic depression in the United States of America. By that time, whites and immigrants had to fight for jobs and because of the low wages the Chinese were willing to work for, whites felt the Chinese were stealing their jobs.

Chinese people were recognized for being very clean, decent, honest, peaceful, and hard working, but suddenly because of some politicians and newspaper editors, they started to appear as a plague; they were compared to rats. In some newspapers, cartoons about Chinese men eating rats and living with them were published with the purpose of ridiculing those people. Politicians enjoyed saying very bad things in their speeches, and new hard laws were created to make the Chinese people leave the country. The feeling by that time was racism. Even a former governor of New York, Horatio Seymour, believed that Chinese people were inferior human beings. Under those circumstances, citizenship was denied to Chinese and the siege was even closer.

The violence against Chinese men resulted the death of many of them in several revolts that occurred in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Seattle, and the West in general. Many unfair laws were passed that obliged the Chinese people to abide by rules that nobody else had to observe, such as paying special taxes. Brutal acts were also committed, for instance, as described by author Michael Martin, in 1877, rioters roamed San Francisco's China Town on three successive nights, beating any Chinese they could find and setting fire to Chinese businesses. It took army troops and some 5,000 citizen vigilantes to finally stop the violence but not until half-million dollars worth of damage was done (60).

Injustice toward the Chinese was very common, an example of that is the case of three white men that murdered a group of Chinese and were not found guilty. During that period of time, end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, many Chinese men died under terrible conditions, either beaten or burned alive. Whites did not care about women and children since they also suffered all kinds of humiliation. Chinese children were banned from going to white schools (Martin 64), so special schools for Chinese were created, showing the racist and discriminating atmosphere by that time.

### ***Things Finally Start to Change***

By 1943, the situation started to change for Chinese people. President Roosevelt started the change by recognizing the harm made to the Chinese immigrants by the American citizens for almost a century. As a consequence, becoming citizens, bringing their women to establish a family, and accessing education were a fact, so that by 1950 Chinese people started having certain status.

As time passed, Chinese people began having more job opportunities in professional fields. Medicine, dentistry, optometry and pharmacy were the fields in which they stood out. Another important change to mention is the decrease in racism as Chinese people were seen now as professionals and very intelligent people. Also, their traditional attitudes played and still play an important role; discipline, for example, helped Chinese American children to show their potential by scoring high marks in school.

### ***Chinese Today: The Chinese –Americans and Their Influence***

The new generations have to deal with the fact of being Americans and the traditions of the culture they come from. While they want to behave just as Americans, their parents remind them the importance of keeping the traditions.

Although many highly educated Chinese Americans are successful in the job market, there are some Chinese immigrants that struggle in jobs with low wages because of their lack of education and knowledge of the English language. This kind of economic advantage or disadvantage makes Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants live a very different sort of life.

The influence of the Chinese culture in the American society has mainly focused on three areas: food, health traditions, and the arts: literature and movies. Chinese food is very remarkable and combines variety with good taste as well as price in the case of the buffets. Nowadays, it is very easy to find a close Chinese buffet restaurant where it is common to find all kind of meats, vegetables, salads, and desserts. That kind of variety attracts people from all backgrounds and ages.

Acupuncture is another Chinese tradition that has gained ground in the American culture. It is used to relieve pain and also other kinds of health discomforts.

Occupying an important place in one of the biggest industries in the United States, Chinese-style movies that include martial arts in the plot have always had an enormous audience. Many Chinese American actors and actresses, such as Jackie Chan and Lucy Liu, have starred in several box-office hits. Bruce Lee is probably the first actor to help to build a new image of the Chinese people through his movies. In spite of his early death, his work is still recognized as one of the best, and he is considered the pioneer of that kind of movie. Movie directors Ang Lee and John Woo have won very important awards for their important role in the movies industry.

### **Latinos or Hispanic**

There is a general thought that if you are a Latino (a) or Hispanic, you were born in Mexico. For some people who are a little bit more informed or educated, a Latino (a) or Hispanic is a person born in one of the countries of the Caribbean—such as Cuba, The Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico—or in Central or South America that speaks Spanish. There is a stereotype about the Latino physical appearance: it is short, dark skin, straight hair, and dark eyes. Half is true, half is not.

For many people it is very difficult to understand the difference between Latino and Hispanic. Even some people from that background do not know what the difference is and adopt the word that they like the most to say what their ethnicity is. There are several definitions for the words Latino and Hispanic. According to the place of birth, a person born in Central or South America has his/her own concept of the words.

In the last decades, people of Latino/Hispanic origin have become very important in many aspects in the American society, such as politics, sports, education, medicine, technology and business in general, among other fields.

Nowadays, Latino/Hispanic immigration to the United States is a big issue, and the influence of this immigrating group has reached big proportions. One of the most important points to mention is the language. Spanish has spread across the nation, making it the second most spoken language in the United States. Advertisements, electronics, food, and some other products have the instructions not only in English and French but also in Spanish, not to mention the importance given by businessmen to the Latino market and the variety of products imported just to make Latinos feel at home. It is very common now to find products from many different countries from

Central and South America that are bought by Latino immigrants as well as American citizens and people from other cultures and backgrounds.

### ***Spaniards in America***

Note: Information in the following sections on Latin American can be found in various texts, including the texts by Cabán and Figueredo listed in the bibliography.

By the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, the Spaniards came to the Americas to “conquer” a new world. Gold was one of the main reasons that brought many expeditions to the American land. In North America, the Spaniards seized the following territories: New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, and Louisiana in the southwest and California in the west. Every single country in Central America was “conquered,” as was every country in South America except Brazil, which was a Portuguese colony. With this settlement the cultural exchange began: Roman Catholicism and Spanish arrived to the “new world.” After more than three centuries, the Spanish colonies became independent, thanks to leaders such as Simón Bolívar and José de San Martín.

### ***Mexico Loses Texas and Other Territories***

By the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many American citizens immigrated to Texas, by that time part of Mexico, attracted to Texas for the possibility of growing cotton. For that reason, the immigrants had to become Mexican citizens, abide by the Mexican rule, and pay taxes to Mexico. Since just few followed those rules and instead behaved as U.S. citizens, Mexico tried to prevent further immigration, but it did not work. On the contrary, the U.S. immigrants joined by some Mexicans fought for independence, and in 1836 Texas became the independent Lone Star Republic of Texas. Mexicans tried to recover Texas but were accused of being invaders by the U.S. government. Finally Mexico received \$15 million from the United States.

Another piece of Mexican territory was also given in to the United States in 1853. This time Mexico received \$10 million for parts of New Mexico and Arizona. The United States continued offering money for land to Mexico until Mexicans felt insulted and saw that as the opportunity to recover what for them were stolen lands. War broke out, but at the end Mexico lost California, Utah, Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Nevada to the United States.

### ***Latin-American Immigration***

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Puerto Ricans and Cubans emigrated from their home countries due to the wars that sought independence from Spain. Puerto Ricans settled in New York City, and Cubans settled mainly in Key West. Both groups of immigrants found jobs for decent wages and brought to the U.S. their traditions and customs.

By 1910 a wave of Mexican immigrants came to the U.S. with the idea of a new and better life. Some were satisfied with what they got; some were not because of the discrimination and lack of a cheerful environment. “Barrios,” neighborhoods of just Latinos, were created and Mexicans felt more secure.

The fact of the agricultural development brought many migrant workers, and in many cases whole families, that traveled from state to state harvesting. When the season was over, they tried to find other kind of labor jobs. In the barrios, some businesses started to open so clerical positions became available. As mentioned before, discrimination was one of the problems of the newcomers since, for instance, an American citizen could earn almost double the wage than a Mexican for doing the same job.

Some years later, two kinds of workers who were desperately needed with the crops and in railroad construction arrived. The first were workers for the Bracero program who had some kind of protection from the government and were legally in the country, while the second kind of

workers or the Mojados or wetbacks were not admitted legally. Mojados did not have government support and often were threaten by employers to be deported if they did not accept the low wages and/or poor working conditions.

War and dictatorships in the Caribbean also sent some immigrants to the United States. That is the case of Fidel Castro's Cuba and Rafael Trujillo's Dominican Republic.

Central and South America faced the same situations in the 1970s and 80s. Dictators, repression, violence, death, and guerilla warfare pushed thousands of people to immigrate. Incredible numbers of people left their countries; in El Salvador a quarter of the population fled, many of them made the U.S. their home. Around 75,000 Argentineans did also. And Colombia sent around 100,000 immigrants by 1976.

That wave of Latino immigration brought to the United States a mixture of flavors, colors, customs, and celebrations, such as festivals, making the U.S. a place where it is possible to find the world reunited on a piece of land.

### ***Latinos Today***

Today Latinos play an important role in the American culture. Food is an important contribution to the high variety of choices that the U.S. population has. Basically the ingredients are the same as in other dishes, but the preparation is quite different. The medical field is filled with highly skilled researchers and scientists from Latin America that came to the United States to continue their education and have achieved many remarkable advances in the creation of new vaccines and treatments. In sports, there are many names of Latino descent playing in the professional leagues, such as MLS, NBA, and MLB. In politics, there are several leaders representing the Latino heritage that occupy positions that have a great impact in the country's well-being. It is also the fastest-growing minority group.

### **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

This unit attempts to be used as part of the Foreign Language Curriculum in my classroom. The unit will be comprised of six classes in which I plan to take the students closer to the different aspects of the several cultures we have at school. I also plan to make the students to tell me what they know about their ancestors and cultures to let them teach me something about immigration and make the classes a kind of exchange of knowledge in which they will be experts about "their native people." In that way the students will investigate and will teach me as much as possible. As usual, a list of requirements about what they need to present to me and to the class will be used. I think that the best opportunity to work on this is at the beginning of the school year to make them get to know their classmates and create a positive environment towards the class and the richness of it. Students will have to work actively in teams and involve their parents in the project, so that it becomes more important and meaningful at the same time.

At the end of this unit I hope my students will be able to talk about the different countries represented in the school and their traditions and value their own background as well as that of others.

### **CONCLUSION**

Creating this curriculum unit was for me, as a teacher, immigrant, and soon as a mother, a very enriching experience. I consider that being in those three positions at the same time allows me have a wider point of view of what the immigration issue really is. But more than the political part of it, what really matters to me is the tremendous impact that the multicultural environment make in our children who after all are the future of the country. At DeBakey, the school where I teach, the common denominator is diversity. The students attending the school are a significant proof of what the City of Houston and the United States of America really are, places that remind

you of years of constant immigration. For me, it is something very enjoyable to start a class and find myself standing in front of a group of faces with different features; young people with different personalities shaped by the fact of not only being the descendents of many different persons with their own beliefs but also being Americans. That is why I found this seminar just perfect for me and my students and felt eager to work and learn.

Being a parent is a job that must be combined with other jobs, and time is scarce for many people; however, I really hope to be successful in making parents and students work together, get involved with the project, and bring them closer to one another in case they do not have enough time to share. Also, I want to leave a mark on the students' hearts by making this unit something enjoyable and meaningful for everyone. I hope that from here on, the students will feel even prouder of their roots than they would have been before working on this curriculum unit as well as arouse their curiosity and need of researching much more about the world in which they live.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson 1**

Students will be asked about their background, that is, where they were born. If they were born in the United States, I will ask where their parents were born in order to identify the students' roots.

After that, students will help me to create a chart which will become very important since they will use the chart to test their knowledge about their own culture and others'. Students will be given a copy of the chart to fill in. First, they will tell me about the main aspects of a culture, such us: religion, music, politics, and food, among others. I will use the board to write the names of different countries and their cultural aspects. Secondly, I will ask them to tell what they know about the different aspects of their culture. Third, if someone knows something about a different culture, they will be asked to write what they know on the board. At this point it does not matter if so far what they say is precise or not. Next, the students will get together with classmates with the same background, by countries (Mexico, Nigeria, China, Japan, India, Pakistan, Vietnam, Philippines) not ethnicity (Asian, Hispanic, African American, White), to discuss what they have in the charts and try to add more information. After ten minutes they will change groups, but this time they will make groups in which the members will have a different background and again will compare what they have in their chart and will try to add more information.

After 10 more minutes, they will go to their assigned seats and will get ready to go to the library where they will find a lot of books previously selected by the librarian and me, as well as a list of web pages they can go to corroborate the information they have in their charts and make any necessary changes. They will spend the rest of the class researching and will bring what they found to the next class meeting.

### **Lesson 2**

I will have the chart with the information gathered the first day on a transparency, and I will ask the students to tell me if every statement is true or not. In case some of the information is false, they will need to tell me the correct information. Another chart will be filled out with new information and corrections. After that we will have a brainstorming exercise. The starting word will be "immigration." We will discuss a little bit about the consequences of immigration for the individuals and families that immigrate and talk about the cultural changes and effects.

Next, they will watch a 30 minute video about immigration to the United States that shows general aspects about the phenomenon and talks about the different cultures and groups that immigrate. The students will be asked to take notes, and then they will fill out a multiple choice questionnaire. The questionnaire will be answered as a group with free participation.

### **Lesson 3**

Students will watch a movie about a Mexican family that struggles to get their citizenship through the 1986 amnesty. Many cultural aspects are shown in this movie so students will be able to discuss what they know about Mexican people and what they see in the movie. The students will not watch the whole movie on this day.

### **Lesson 4**

The students will finish watching the movie. Right after that, students will be given a questionnaire with some questions about the story for them to show their understanding of the plot. Answering the questionnaire will take approximately 10 to 12 minutes.

A discussion about the movie will be open; the students will be free to express their thoughts about the teachings of the movie not only about the Latino culture and immigration but also about life and feelings. The discussion will take 10 to 12 minutes. The planning of the International Fair will start this class. The writing of the invitations to parents to come to the class to share their experiences as immigrants will be done this class. The teacher will elicit ideas from the students and the invitation will be a product of the whole group. Date and time will be set. A volunteer student will be in charge of typing the invitation and bring it the next meeting for the teacher to make copies to send to the parents. The teacher will ask the students to invite their parents to come; it must be clear that we need a parent or couple of parents per nationality or background.

### **Lesson 5**

The invitations will be sent home on this day. The questionnaire for the parents attending the interview must be elaborated; for that reason the children will write a minimum of two questions each; they will be given some pieces of paper to write the questions. After ten minutes the questions will be collected. The teacher will ask the students for help to select the most appropriate questions or improve the way some questions are asked. The questionnaire will be ready in this class.

Ideas for the International Fair will be gathered. The organization of the Fair starts in this class. Among others, the students will take care of the following: How to organize the stands, what to wear, what to bring, the possibility of bringing food, whom to invite, who will welcome the audience, how to open the fair, and what to say when people go to a stand and how.

### **Lesson 6**

The students will write a minimum of a two-page long report about what they learned through the curriculum unit. A self-evaluation of their contributions to the success of the unit will be included in this class and must be filled out by end of this class along with the report. The students will be given a grade for the report. The report will need to match the requirements criteria.

## **ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY**

### **Works Cited**

Cabán, Pedro, José Carrasco, Bárbara Cruz, and Juan García. *The Latino Experience in U.S. History*. Paramus, NJ: Globe Fearon Educational Publisher, 1994.

This is a very detailed work about the Latino influence in U.S. history since the very early days until present. Designed for young students, it compiles every single aspect about history as well as culture.

*China Geography*. 1998-2004. Kidport. 4 July 2006.

<[www.kidport.com/RefLib/WorldGeography/China/China.htm](http://www.kidport.com/RefLib/WorldGeography/China/China.htm)>.

- Figueredo, D. H. *The Complete Idiot's Guide to Latino History and Culture*. Indianapolis, IN: Alpha Books, 2002. This is a very complete guide through the Latin American world in the United States.
- Houle, Michelle E. *The Vietnamese*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson Gale, 2006.  
This is an anthology of a series of anthologies about particular immigrant groups and their challenges when coming to America.
- Ingram, Scott, and Christina M. Girod. *The Indian Americans*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson Gale, 2004.  
It is also part of the *Immigrants in America Series*. Describes in detail the process of Indian immigration from the first wave until present.
- Martin Michael. *Chinese Americans*. Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003.  
Part of the series *Immigrants in America* describes how the Chinese-Americans ancestors had to face different kinds of challenges to be accepted as immigrants in the United States.
- Novas, Himilce. *Everything You Need to Know about Latino History*. New York: Penguin Group, 2003.  
An overview about Latinos from History to Culture and the tremendous influence this immigrant group has had in the American society.
- "The Socialist Republic of Vietnam." *Vietnam: Country and People*. Vietnam National Administration of Tourism. 4 July 2006. <[www.vietnamtourism.com/e\\_pages/country/overview.asp](http://www.vietnamtourism.com/e_pages/country/overview.asp)>.
- Tour India*. 4 July 2006. <[www.tourindia.com/htm/homepage.htm](http://www.tourindia.com/htm/homepage.htm)>.

### **Supplemental Resources**

- Shane, C.J. *The Mexicans*. Farmington Hills, MI: Thompson Gale, 2005.  
This book belongs to the series of anthologies mentioned above. It has many stories and also talks about History of the Mexican immigration since the early days of immigration.
- Sweet Fifteen*. Dir. Victoria Hochberg. Perf. Karla Montana and Panchito Gómez. WonderWorks Movies. 1990.
- The Golden Door: Our Nation of Immigrants*. Madison, WI: Knowledge Unlimited. 1996.