



Positioning Immigrants as Assets

Changing the Dialogue from Deficit to Asset

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Rising Anti-Immigrant Sentiment

- After 9-11, anti-immigrant groups co-opted the conversation
- Painted immigrants and immigration as economic and social drain
- Promoted myths, misinformation and downright lies



The ILC Public Education Institute



- Started in 2003 to tell the other side of the story
- Commissioned research studies to develop credible, alternative narrative
- Eleven studies to document economic and social contributions
- Inform policy, media, public, field



Economic and Social Contributions



- Entrepreneurs
- Workers in critical economic sectors
- Interweave research, people and stories
 - Research provides credible messages
 - Involving immigrants gives them a voice
 - **Story develops appreciation around shared values, commonalities and mutual benefits**





Local is Important

- How these ideas might work in your community
 - Relating to local values and circumstances
 - Checklists to get started
 - Helpful hints





Immigrants as Entrepreneurs

- Economic and social contributions in three business categories:
 - **Neighborhood**
 - **Business Growth**
 - **Science and Technology**



Neighborhood Revitalization



- Revitalize blighted neighborhoods
- Provide diversity of goods and services
- Expand beyond initial niches
- Attract new customers into area
- Enhance public safety

Neighborhood Business

MALEE THAI **Cambodia**

Owner:

Pailin City restaurant,
market, function hall,
Lowell, MA

Came to U.S.:
1981





Malee Thai

Pailin City Restaurant, Grocery and Function Hall

- Malee fled Cambodia after her family was killed
- Transitioned from survival to seizing opportunity
- Transformed convenience store to Southeast Asian grocery
- Expanded into Pailin City: a one-stop-shop for all things Cambodian
- A shining light in a city climbing out of long-term economic decline



Growing Businesses



- Intention to get bigger, hire more workers
- Concentration in transportation, food and building services
- Strengthen local economies and provide local jobs
- Largely unrecognized



Growing Businesses

- **Transportation**

- 49% self-employed taxis and limousine service

- **Food**

- More than one-third of all food businesses
- Specialty food and restaurants

- **Building Services**

- More than 40%: strong in cleaning and restoration

- Note: Immigrants are only 13% of total population



Transportation Business

HECTOR RICKETTS
Jamaica

Founder:
Community
Transportation,
New York, NY





Hector Ricketts

Community Transportation

- 40 vans transport 40,000 commuters
- Areas underserved or remote
- Affordable, necessary
- Spin-off businesses





Hector Ricketts

The bigger picture

“We are providing jobs. We are getting people in our community to connections that get them to work on time.”

“We’re buying vans from Ford, which keeps other workers employed. We use local mechanics. We buy gas at local gas stations.”

“The restaurants we go to help stabilize the community. We support the tire shops and the insurance companies.”





Hector Ricketts

The future

“It’s a good feeling to know that when I’m gone there will be people going to work taking people to work.”



Food Business

**HELENE &
THOMAS STOHR**
Switzerland

Founders:
swissbakers,
Reading & Allston, MA



Helene and Thomas Stohr



- Authentic, organic baked goods
- Debuted in farmer's markets, now expanded catering and in Whole Foods, opened second cafe
- Annual growth rate of 25%
- Adding 30 more workers per year





Building Services

YADIRA FRAGOSO

Mexico

President:

We Can Do It!
cleaning co-op,
Brooklyn, NY





Yadira Fragoso

We Can Do It! Cleaning Co-op

- Combining independence with strength of the community
- Each member owns her own business
- Group benefits of training, shared marketing
- Gaining control over their lives



Science/Technology Businesses



- Variable across country
- 25% immigrant-founded
- \$52 billion revenue and 450,000 workers
- Keeping U.S. on cutting edge of innovation

Science and Technology

SRIDHAR IYENGAR
and **SONNY VU**
India/U.S. and Vietnam

Founders:
AgaMatrix, Inc., MA





Sridhar Iyengar and Sonny Vu

AgaMatrix, Inc.

Started in a cramped apartment with \$1.25 for lunch; they impressed would-be investors

- Knew how to work hard and not waste money
- Developed a smart team working cheap
- Scientific advances that led to mobile glucose monitoring product to use with iPhones
- Highly valuable given the rise of diabetes



Science and Technology

AMAR SAWHNEY

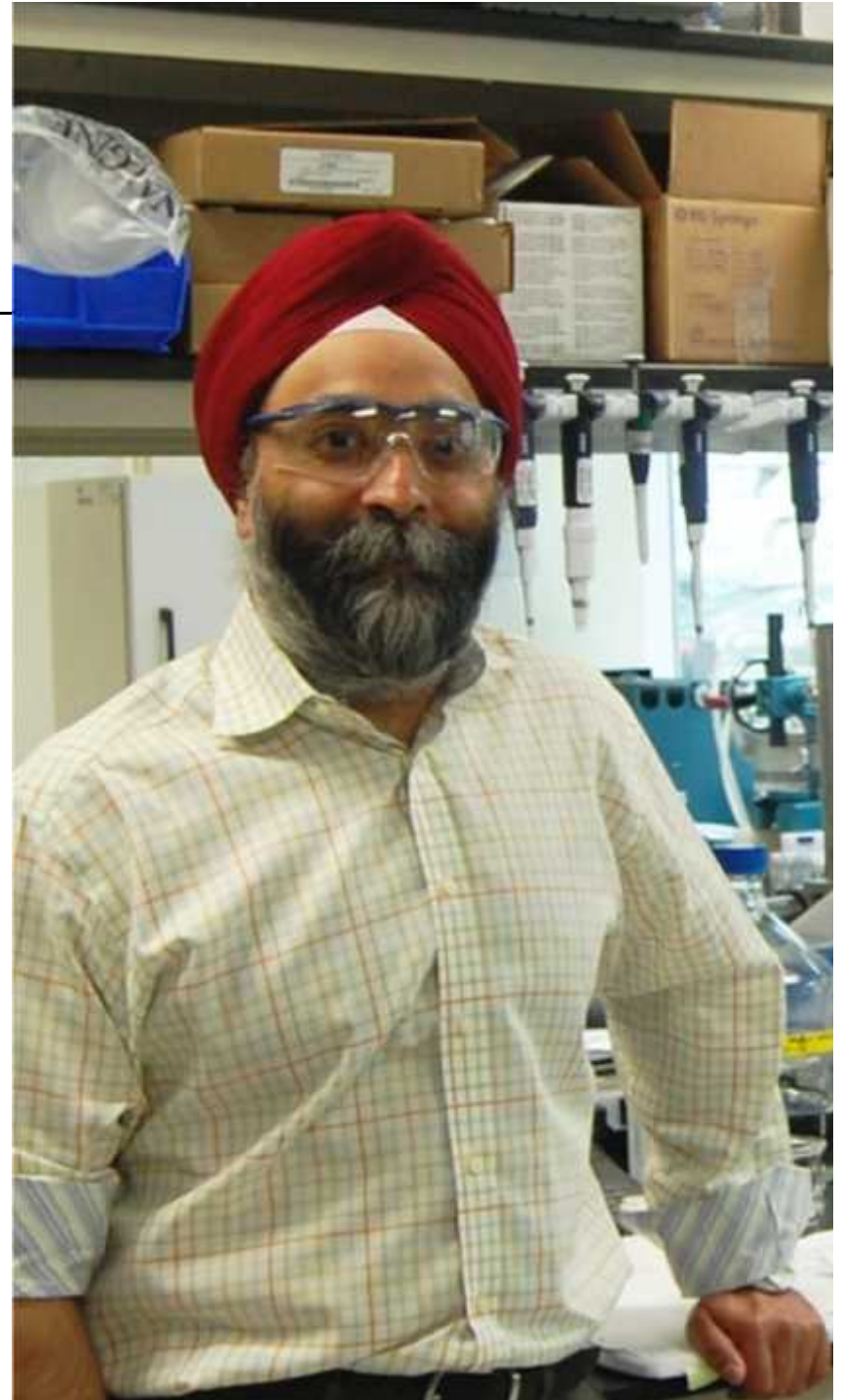
India

Owner:

Ocular Therapeutix,
Bedford, MA

Came to U.S.:

1987



Grateful for Opportunity in U.S.



<http://youtu.be/J-vU3FVXsJY?t=2m44s>





Health Care

- Health care is a crucial life issue for everyone
- Immigrants fill critical job vacancies at both high and low ends
- Baby boomers aging and need more care
- Affordable Health Care Act will increase demand
- Diversifying population needs cultural competence





Health Care

- Immigrant health care workers concentrated in high- and low-skill ends
 - 27% of physicians and surgeons
- International medical science graduates are 30% of the primary-care workforce
- Practice in underserved and rural areas
- Immigrants are 15% of nurses
 - Many complicating factors



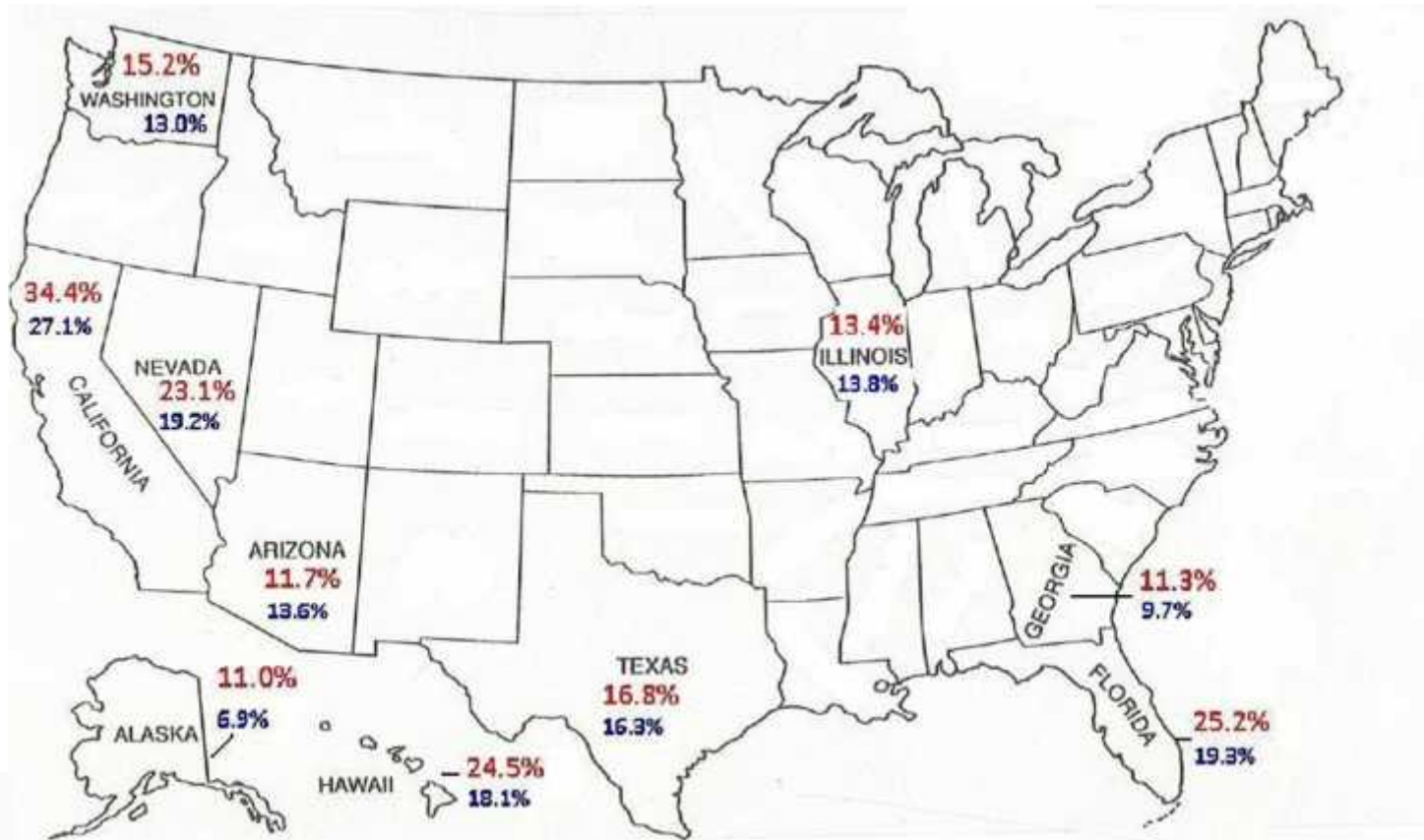


Lower-Skill Occupations

- 22% of nursing, psychiatric and home health aides
- 19% of elder care workforce
 - Fast growth projection due to aging U.S. population
 - Significant “Gray Market” probably exists

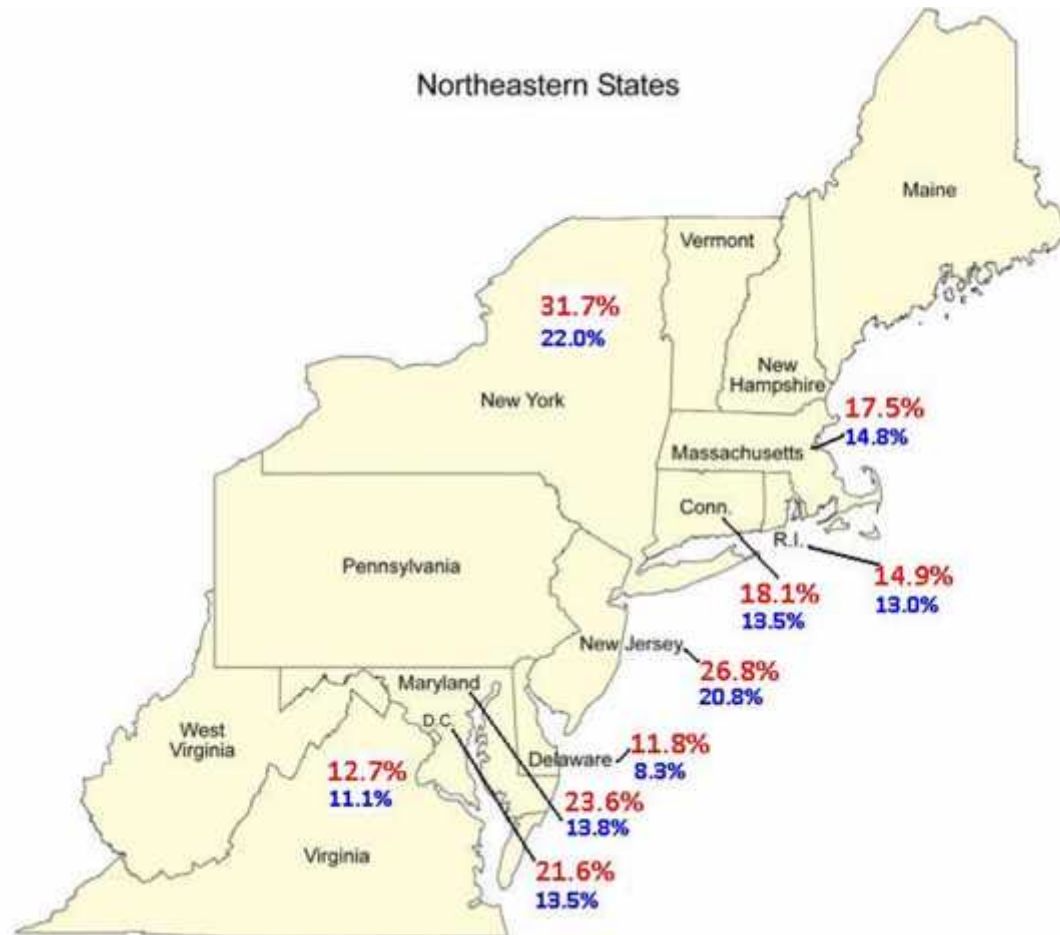


Health Care Providers



Red numbers = immigrant share of medical professionals; blue numbers = immigrant share of population
Source: Institute for Immigration Research, George Mason University

Health Care Providers



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Your Community

- Who is staffing your hospitals?
- Who is staffing your nursing homes?
- Who provides in-home care?
- Who is working in the pharmacies?
- Who is in the medical research centers?





Key Messages

- Innovations to improve human health
- Skilled labor
 - Physicians/surgeons
 - Pharmacists
 - Physician assistants, nurse practitioners
- Culturally competent care
- Taking care of elders in our families





Getting Started: Checklists/Hints

- Expanded list of characteristics, traits and contributions
- Connect to values likely held
- Getting started
 - Finding immigrant-owned businesses in your community
 - Getting to know the businesses
 - Getting stories
 - Looking at staffing in health care





Telling the Story

- Incorporating into community activities and venues, e.g.:
 - Business award categories
 - Work-related and career awareness activities at high schools
 - Community activities to celebrate diversity
 - Stories in bulletins and on websites

See guidelines and checklists to get started



Resources



Food, Transport and Building Services in the U.S. with a focus on Massachusetts, Pennsylvania and New York

Download our studies and view our
Immigrant Entrepreneur Hall of Fame + Video Interviews:

www.ilctr.org/promoting-immigrants

All contemporary immigration research:

www.immigrationresearch-info.org





Thank you

