Teaching English with Immigrant Narratives: Student Voice and Personal Stories

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The Question
Teacher Professional Development

- Immigrant Stories and Identity
- Immigration Myths and Realities
- Immigration History
Immigrant Stories

Share personal stories
  ◦ Level of personal disclosure/vulnerability

Identify common themes

Build (community) on those themes
Let us look at your stories on Padlet

Read 2 or 3 of stories (other than yours) and see if you identify some themes or see an experience similar to yours.

Go to the chat and write the common themes or experiences.
Let us look at your stories on Padlet

Some themes:
- Food shortages
- Limited education
- Moving around
- Food banks, public housing
- Going to school without English
- Sacrifice
- Opportunities
- Hard work

- Career changes
- Abandoning traditions from the past
- Making up new traditions
- Wish that you would have listened more to the stories
- Ancestors coming from many countries
- Finding a better life
- Farmers
- Difficult process
Building Community

Are there any themes in other stories that are common to your story?

Do you hear any experience similar to your family’s experience?
The Identity Mosaic

Immigrant Identity

The circle of identity
Is your immigration story part of your Identity?
Target or Advantaged?
Student Identity

Consider your students in light of the identity mosaic:

What components of their social identity make them targets of anti-immigrant sentiments?
In what ways are your students targeted/discriminated?
In what ways—if any— are they Advantaged?
Student Identity

Student stories

Culturally determined perceptions and expectations

Social identity $\rightarrow$ targets of discrimination

Identity on hold
The Master Narrative

✓ Who owns it?
✓ How do we serve it?
✓ How do we change it?

and most importantly...

✓ How do our students fit in the Master Narrative?
How do our students write themselves into America?

How do we encourage them to tell their stories?

How do these stories fit in our curriculum?
Writing Our Students into America

- Tell your story (immigration, your life in your country, a story about your childhood, etc.)
- Listen to the Stories
- Identify Common Themes
- Build Community/Develop Empathy
Writing your stories

Other People’s Words
The Cycle of Low Literacy
Victoria Purcell-Gates
One of your stories...

**When land connects**

My parents are immigrants from Mexico. They left Mexico in their late twenties. My father got work opportunities in California. They had a supportive community that included family and religious institutions.

The USA offered resources for low-income families and we grew up moving around until there was the possibility of living in public housing.
A Muslim Crossing the Border
“The Police Stop Us Every Time.”
Abukar

On September 11, 2001, a few people did something terrible. They committed terrorism. These people were Muslims, but they did not act like real Muslims. The Koran teaches us not to kill.

These terrorists killed many people on that day. They hurt many families. They also hurt the Muslim community. For example, last year, I went to the U.S. to visit my sister. On the border, the police stopped us. They saw we have a Muslim name. They held us for four hours. They checked the car. They fingerprinted us and took our pictures.

It was a horrible moment. I felt helpless. The police still stop us every time we visit the U.S. It takes many hours for us to cross the border.

Now I don’t visit my sister. I hate the humiliation of crossing the border.
Resources


The Change Agent: [www.nelrc.org/changeagent](http://www.nelrc.org/changeagent)
THANK YOU

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