African Americans

Cuban Americans

Japanese Americans

Korean Americans

Mexican Americans

Vietnamese Americans

Religious Groups

Catholic

Christian

Muslim

Protestant

Other

This is an excerpt from a magazine article discussing the diversity of ethnic groups in the United States. The text mentions the different contributions and experiences of various ethnic communities, such as African Americans, Cuban Americans, Japanese Americans, Korean Americans, Mexican Americans, and Vietnamese Americans, as well as religious groups like Catholic, Christian, Muslim, and Protestant. The article highlights the rich tapestry of cultures and faiths that make up the United States, emphasizing the importance of understanding and appreciating diversity.
institutions, such as a complex family structure or the social practices within their communities. Members of an ethnic group tend to see themselves—and to be seen by outsiders—as separate from other people. The *Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups* lists 106 major groups in the United States today, including Native Americans, Albanians, Afro-Americans, Arabs, Burmese, Chinese, Eskimos, Filipinos, Greeks, Irish, Italians, Jews, Mexicans, Puerto Ricans and Swiss. There are really more. For example, there are more than 170 different Native American tribes. For the sake of simplicity, the encyclopedia treats them as one. In the same way, Syrians, Jordanians, Egyptians and Palestinians are all counted as Arabs.

Most members of ethnic groups long established in the United States have lost much of the distinctiveness of their culture. This phenomenon, known as assimilation, for example, may only speak English and may think of themselves as "American". Americans. Third generation Chinese, however, often retain their language and many cultural and family traditions. They usually define themselves as Chinese-Americans.

Members of most ethnic groups are full participants in the broad tapestry of American life, even if they keep alive many of their old traditions. The Irish, Germans, Poles, Jews, Mormons and Catholics, for example, have moved into almost all social, economic and political sectors. Some ethnic groups, however, suffer disadvantages which continue to keep them from freely participating in some areas of American professional and cultural life. Poverty and all the deprivation that goes with it make it more difficult for black Americans and Puerto Ricans to acquire the social and educational skills needed to enter more desirable and more highly paid occupations. Racial prejudice and discrimination against Chinese and Native Americans has often meant that many members of those groups have been forced to live and work in narrow sectors of American life. Recent Hispanic immigrants, such as Mexicans and Puerto Ricans, also have encountered discrimination based on their ethnicity.

Those ethnic groups which suffer systematic economic or social disadvantages are called minority groups. About one of every five Americans is a member of such a group. In the past, many minority groups overcame the barriers that confronted them. The Irish, the Italians and the Germans, the Catholics and the Jews all faced hostility and discrimination which severely restricted their opportunities for decades. In time they largely overcame these barriers and became fully integrated into national life. There are many signs that today's minorities are following the same path. For several decades, it has been an official aim of public policy to encourage such an outcome.

**Colonial Beginnings**

Among the major European powers that attempted to settle North America, Britain was the most successful. Its colonies in Virginia (1607) and Massachusetts (1620) laid the foundation for the experiences of ethnic groups in the following centuries.

The English language, as well as English laws, and social, economic and religious customs were successfully transplanted to the New World. All of the groups which followed these earliest colonists were measured by their adherence to English standards. This meant that later immigrants had to undergo a period of adjustment during which they were treated as outsiders. During the colonial period Germans, Scotch-Irish, French Protestants and others had to undergo these trials.

The colonists' relations with the Native Americans were full of conflict from the beginning. This was because the two communities did not share the same social and economic values. When the colonists found they could not turn the "Indians" into trading partners, they perceived them only as an obstacle to a more rapid exploitation of the land by Europeans. As many thousands of immigrants were brought to the colonies in the first few decades, they entered an intense competition with the Native Americans for land. By the 1670s, the pattern had been set: Most territorial conflicts between whites and Native Americans were settled by force of arms. That practice continued for 200 years.

Slaves had been imported from Africa into Virginia by Virginia and Spanish traders as early as 1619. Later in the same century, immigration from England slowed, while the need for cheap labor increased. This led to an enormous increase in the slave trade after 1662. Most of these Africans were imported to work on large agricultural plantations, but they soon were found in a wide range of craft and service occupations. In 1671, one in 20 residents in Virginia was black; by 1770, four in 10. One of the longest lasting aspects of the subjugation of blacks and Indians was the common European view of them as uncivilizable, naturally cruel and simple-minded people. In one form or another these racist ideas must still be combated today.

**Independence to Civil War**

The patterns of the colonial period long endured. Immigration was encouraged when people were needed—to settle the newly annexed lands of the Northwest Territories in the early 1800s and to help build canals and, later, railroads, for example. The new immigrants were usually poor and found themselves on the bottom of the social and economic scale. Over the course of a generation or two, most European immigrants could merge into the larger Anglo-American society and escape the burden of minority status. This was not possible for Afro-Americans and Native Americans.

While ethnic and minority groups were struggling with one another for economic security, the new United States had become the most democratic nation on earth. Free competition among people to feel that each person's ideas and efforts were worthy to be judged against every other person's ideas.

The recognition that the rights of each citizen depend upon maintaining the rights of all was a central tenet in the Declaration of Independence (1776). In that document, each citizen was declared to have natural rights to the security of life, the exercise of social and political liberty, and to the pursuit of the economic goals of individual prosperity.

The Declaration also asserted that "all men are created equal." It may seem strange that this idea was emphasized in the presence of slavery and a clear inequality among actual groups. However, the writers were repeating a view which was already a fundamental ideal within the American system. A Massachusetts legal code of 1641 had asserted the right of every person to "speak his mind before God or any other foreigner to enjoy the same justice and law that is general for the colony."

Ideas have real consequences, even when they only imperfectly describe the world. One perspective is that American history is that all groups have felt free to struggle to raise their economic and political status in relation to other groups. A great influx of immigrants occurred after 1820. The opening of the territory in the West and the development of industry created new opportunities for millions of people. By 1850, the population numbered 23 million. Only 100 years later it totaled 311 million.

Between 1840 and 1860, European farmers from Ireland, Germany and Great Britain came in great numbers to the United States. A few of these came to escape religious or political pressures, but most sought greater economic opportunity.

Most of these immigrants landed at one of the five major American ports: New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Baltimore and New Orleans. New York was the nation's largest city and led all the others as a center of commerce and industry.

Many immigrants remained in the cities. Others moved inland to the West. By 1860 they made up a majority of the population in New York, Chicago and New Orleans. Jobs were created as fast as boats could bring people to fill them. Except for the port city of New Orleans, the Southern States included more immigrants than all the Northern states combined. The Germans attempted to retain their language and their ways of life. They created communities with old-world institutions such as concert and lecture halls, schools and theaters, beer gardens, and social and athletic societies. They were both Protestant and Catholic.

In contrast, the three million Irish who came to these shores in the 1840s and 1850s were almost all poor and had been peasants in Ireland. They were also Catholic. This aroused a great deal of fear and anxiety among native Protestants. Poor Protestant workers felt threatened by the willingness of the Irish to work for lower wages.

The Irish were the poorest of the 19th century immigrants. They were crowded into the eastern port and industrial cities, where they formed a readily available unskilled labor market for the growing industrial enterprises. For decades this combination of poverty, Catholicism and economic rivalry led to the
Suppose small fields had been planted in Asia and Europe, and the crops were harvested quickly. With the labor force tied to the land, the surplus workers could then be employed in the cities, where they could contribute to the growth of national economies.

In the United States, the decline in population and the increased labor force were accompanied by a rise in productivity. Agriculture was modernized, and new techniques were developed that allowed farmers to produce more food with less labor. The result was a decrease in farm labor, which provided the opportunity for the growth of the manufacturing sector.

In summary, the demographic transition theory suggests that changes in population and labor force can have a significant impact on the economy. In the United States, the decline in population and the increased labor force contributed to the growth of the manufacturing sector.

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