



**RevolutionNJ**

ENGAGE THE PAST. SHAPE THE FUTURE.

**“A Bundle of Silences: Reimagining Interpretive Approaches to the Past”  
FAQ and Additional Resources**

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**Interpretive Theme: Movement of People**

**Webinar Title: Movement of People in New Jersey**

**Scholar: Dr. Kathleen Lopez, Rutgers University, Department of Latino and Caribbean Studies and History**

**FAQ:**

**What is the difference between “old” and “new” immigration?**

The casting of recent arrivals as undesirable “new” immigrants, in contrast to earlier groups, is a repeating theme in U.S. history. For example, Irish and German immigrants of the mid-nineteenth century—who brought with them different cultures and religions—conflicted with Anglo-Saxon Protestants. By 1880, however, Irish and Germans were considered “old” immigrants who contributed to the nation, largely succeeded in assimilating, and were juxtaposed to new arrivals from southern and eastern Europe. In turn, immigrants today— especially African, Asian, Latin American, and Middle Eastern—are negatively compared with the Italians, Jews, and Slavs of a century ago. The common thread is that when new (and nonwhite) immigrants of different ethnicities and religions arrive in significant numbers, they are often cast as unassimilable and a threat to the nation.

**How are refugees different from immigrants?**

In simple terms, immigrants choose to move, while refugees are forced to flee armed conflict or persecution and have a right to international protection. Within the U.S. context, the distinction between these two categories and between political and economic migrants has shifted over time and can be an artificial one. Many of the original European settlers of New Jersey were seeking refuge from political and religious oppression, as well as economic opportunity. Escape from persecution can also be a motivating factor for groups who are usually categorized as immigrants. For example, the Irish fleeing famine and disease in the mid-nineteenth century sought to improve their material circumstances and chances of survival. But Irish Catholics had also been subject to a longstanding English colonial rule that relegated them to marginal plots of land that became impossible to sustain. In the 1930s, the tragic refusal of the United States to accept many Jewish refugees escaping Nazism demonstrates the continued power of ethnic and religious intolerance. During the Cold War, however, the United States admitted over three million refugees, even amidst opposition. A path to citizenship was opened for Cubans fleeing communist rule on the island after 1959. But in subsequent years, Haitians and Central Americans escaping political unrest, violence, and warfare have not enjoyed the same benefits. The

American Immigration Council notes that “...we might not be far off the mark to say that America is as much a land of refugees as a land of immigrants, as much a place of refuge as a place of opportunity.”

### **How has Puerto Rican migration to New Jersey differed from other groups?**

Movement and exchange between Puerto Rico and the United States goes back several centuries. The American revolutionaries found support among Puerto Rican Creoles from the Spanish Caribbean island. Puerto Rican merchants also traded with eastern seaboard cities, and small enclaves of exiles developed by the early nineteenth century. The island became a U.S. territory after the 1898 war with Spain. As U.S. citizens since 1917, Puerto Ricans are technically migrants, not immigrants. The relative ease of labor recruitment and movement has produced a situation in which about half of Puerto Ricans live in the continental United States. Yet, in moving to the mainland, they share characteristics with other immigrant groups: often an initial migration from a rural to urban area, followed by a journey overseas. As a multiracial, Spanish-speaking group, Puerto Ricans face many of the cultural adjustments and discrimination as immigrants. Similarly, their second-generation children have different experiences based on race, class, education levels, and local context. Puerto Rican difficulties with access to housing, employment, and education in cities are also parallel to those of U.S. Blacks, which set the stage for conflict as well as coalition-building in urban communities.

### **Were people from Asian countries present in New Jersey before 1965?**

People from Asian countries have circulated within the Western hemisphere for centuries. Beginning in the sixteenth century, the Spanish Galleon trade between New Spain (Mexico) and the Philippines initiated the transpacific circulation of “exotic” goods and spices, along with male and female sailors and servants from different parts of Asia. By the eighteenth century, the British East India Company established trade routes that reached the American colonies, including New Jersey. Some workers jumped ship to escape difficult conditions. A handful of East Indians served in the Continental Army, including New Jersey regiments. British Indian seamen continued to enter eastern ports into the twentieth century, blending in with African American and Caribbean communities. In the nineteenth century, indentured Chinese laborers fled Cuban sugar plantations and made their way to plantations in the U.S. south or tobacco factories in the northeast. Also, while Ellis Island is mostly known for the millions of European immigrants who used it as a portal to a new life, smaller numbers of Asians also attempted to enter through its gates, many of them detained. Although in much smaller numbers than after 1965, New Jersey thus had significant Asian populations in earlier periods.

### **How can I connect the lives of people today such as Kokila Bahadur and Mercedes Valle to the Revolutionary Era?**

In the 1960s and 1970s people like Mercedes Valle and Kokila Bahadur were pioneers. Bahadur moved to New Jersey to pursue medical training, then served as a conduit for other relatives from Guyana. Valle arrived in Newark at the age of six and faced the challenges of adjusting to a new school as a non-English speaker from a different culture. She and other students of her generation took a risk by

pursuing higher education within a university that was ill-prepared to support Blacks and Puerto Ricans of lower socioeconomic classes, and challenged that system along the way. She draws inspiration from the past to help new immigrant families navigate New Jersey public schools. Their struggles are similar to those of the people on the move during the Revolutionary Era in New Jersey, whether indigenous families advocating for their children to be educated locally, free Blacks using their position to assist others still under bondage, or European settlers making demands on a colonial power deemed to be unjust.

## **Additional Resources:**

### **New Jersey**

Hughes, James W. and David Listokin. *Population Trends in New Jersey*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2022.

Lurie, Maxine N. and Richard F. Veit, eds. *New Jersey: A History of the Garden State*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018.

McCormick, Richard P. *New Jersey from Colony to State 1609-1789*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1964.

Mitnick, Barbara J., ed., *New Jersey in the American Revolution*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2005.

### **Indigenous Peoples and African Americans**

Fuentes, Marisa J. and Deborah Gray White, eds. *Scarlet and Black, Volume 1: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2016.

Gao Hodges, Graham Russell. *Black New Jersey: 1664 to the Present Day*. New Brunswick: University Press, 2019.

Gigantino, James J. II. *The Ragged Road to Abolition: Slavery and Freedom in New Jersey, 1775-1865*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.

Kraft, Herbert C. *The Lenape-Delaware Indian Heritage: 10,000 B.C.-A.D. 2000*. Lenape Books, 2001.

Rothstein, Richard. *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright, 2017.

Wilkerson, Isabel. *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*. New York: Random House, 2010.

Wright, Giles R. *Afro-Americans in New Jersey: A Short History*. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, Department of State, 1988.

Wright, Giles R. and Edward Lama Wonkeryor. “*Steal Away, Steal Away...*” *A Guide to the Underground Railroad in New Jersey*. New Jersey Historical Commission.  
<https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10929/24563/h6732002.pdf?sequence=1>

## **Migrant Workers**

Bonilla-Santiago, Gloria. *Organizing Puerto Rican Migrant Farmworkers: The Experience of Puerto Ricans in New Jersey*. Peter Lang, 1988.

Garcia-Colon, Ismael. *Colonial Migrants at the Heart of Empire: Puerto Rican Workers on U.S. Farms*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2020.

Hahamovitch, Cindy. *No Man’s Land: Jamaican Guestworkers in America and the Global History of Deportable Labor*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011.

Urban, Andy. *Invisible Restraints: Life and Labor at Seabrook Farms*. New Jersey Digital Highway [https://njdigitalhighway.org/exhibits/seabrook\\_farms](https://njdigitalhighway.org/exhibits/seabrook_farms)

## **Immigrants and Ethnic Groups**

Alonso Bejarano, Carolina, Lucia López Juárez, Mirian A. Mijangos García, and Daniel M. Goldstein. *Decolonizing Ethnography: Undocumented Immigrants and New Directions in Social Science*. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019.

Deyrup, Marta Mestrovic and Maura Grace Harrington, eds. *The Irish-American Experience in New Jersey and Metropolitan New York: Cultural Identity, Hybridity, and Commemoration*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2014.

Marinari, Maddalena, Madeline Y. Hsu, María Cristina García, eds., *A Nation of Immigrants Reconsidered: U.S. Society in an Age of Restriction, 1924-1965*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2019.

Ngai, Mae M. *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Rodriguez, Robyn Magalit. *In Lady Liberty’s Shadow: The Politics of Race and Immigration in New Jersey*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2017.

Shaw, Douglas V. *Immigration and Ethnicity in New Jersey History*. Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1994.

Spickard, Paul. *Almost All Aliens: Immigration, Race, and Colonialism in American History and Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2007.

## Latinos

Castillo-Montoya, Milagros. *Cubans in New Jersey: Migrants Tell Their Stories*. Newark: The Newark Public Library, 2012.

Gonzalez, Juan. *Harvest of Empire: A History of Latinos in America*. Penguin Books, 2011.

Prieto, Yolanda. *The Cubans of Union City: Immigrants and Exiles in a New Jersey Community*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2009.

Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y. *Street Therapists: Race, Affect, and Neoliberal Personhood in Latino Newark*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012.

Sanchez Korrol, Virginia. "History of Puerto Ricans in the U.S." CENTRO: Center for Puerto Rican Studies, City University of New York.

<https://centropr.hunter.cuny.edu/education/history-puerto-ricans-us>

Thomas, Lorrin and Aldo A. Lauria Santiago, *Rethinking the Struggle for Puerto Rican Rights*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

## Asians

Bald, Vivek. *Bengali Harlem and the Lost Histories of South Asian America*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015.

<http://bengaliharlem.com/>

Higashide, Seiichi. *Adios to Tears: The Memoirs of a Japanese-Peruvian Internee in U.S. Concentration Camps*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000.

Kalita, S. Mitra. *Suburban Sahibs: Three Immigrant Families and Their Passage from India to America*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2003.

Matsumoto, Noriko. *Beyond the City and the Bridge: East Asian Immigration in a New Jersey Suburb*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2018.

Okiihiro, Gary Y. *Margins and Mainstreams: Asians in American History and Culture*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994.

SAADA South Asian American Digital Archive

<https://www.saada.org/>

Urban, Andy. *Chinese Exclusion in New Jersey*. New Jersey Digital Highway.

[https://njdigitalhighway.org/exhibits/chinese\\_exclusion](https://njdigitalhighway.org/exhibits/chinese_exclusion)

## **Additional Online Resources**

Rutgers Scarlet and Black Research Center

<https://www.scarletandblack.org/>

Institute for the Study of Global Racial Justice

Rutgers University-New Brunswick

Newest Americans: Stories from the Global City

<https://newestamericans.com/>

Center for Migration and the Global City

School of Arts & Sciences, Rutgers University-Newark

New Jersey Hispanic Information and Research Center (The Newark Public Library)

<https://npl.org/collections-services/njhric>

Pew Research Center

<https://www.pewresearch.org/>

Reports on immigration and migration, race and ethnicity, politics and policy, census data and demographics

#ImmigrationSyllabus

<https://immigrationsyllabus.lib.umn.edu/>

(Immigration History Research Center at the University of Minnesota and Immigration and Ethnic History Society)

Essential topics, readings, and multimedia that provide historical context to current debates over immigration reform, integration, and citizenship

Immigration History (Immigration and Ethnic History Society)

<https://immigrationhistory.org/>

Library of Congress, Classroom Materials

<https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/>

Primary sources, lesson plans, and presentations on immigration, ethnic heritage, cities, oral histories, and more