Melting Pot or Mosaic? How far should a minority assimilate?

Greetings to all delegates at this year’s Model United Nations and welcome to this year’s conference. My name is Robbie Grindlay and I am chairing this topic of debate in the Human Rights committee alongside my colleagues, Alex Catechis and Jonny Dennis. Personally I am rather new to MUN – this will be the first conference I have chaired in and I am very excited to witness the sheer excellence of the upcoming debate. We will be dealing with issues of individuals who leave a country of origin to settle into a new society, the processes of immigration and assimilation. I’m going to give you a clear outline of what this is about in more detail and tell you what you need to know in order to debate effectively. Remember, MUN is about having fun. Everyone is in the same boat, so do not be put off by anyone. Be confident and enjoy yourselves!

What is assimilation?

Assimilation is the term used to describe people from distinct backgrounds coming together and living in one area or country. It consists of people from different ethnic backgrounds and walks of life residing under the roof of one nation. A perfect example of a ‘melting pot’ is the United States, providing homes to an array of diverse populations, such as Hispanic, European, and Asian populations. Through time all of these vastly different minorities have merged into one, hence they have melted together. However, some countries experience immigration and those that arrive in a new country remain within their ethnic/cultural group, making no effort to assimilate or in effect harmonise with the population of the host country. A mosaic-patterned country would be the United Kingdom with their Asian and Slavic populations. Thus describing such a situation as a mosaic: Many different parts constitute a bigger picture.

Why does immigration happen?

There are various reasons for this movement from one nation to another: social, religious or economic factors can contribute to immigration occurring amongst people. If a country has no cultural or social barriers, this can also encourage immigration. Some immigrants are opportunistic: they are there in search of making a living. However, many others are not. After all, there are 191 million immigrants worldwide. This transiency can lead to crime as migrants are not, perhaps in some cases in as privileged a position as the local population.

Advantages of Immigration:

Immigrants can take up low level, sometimes dangerous, jobs that aid the economy to prosper.

They can provide a great talent pool to the host country, hence diversifying the workforce.

They are prepared to work for a smaller wage than the locals, resulting in a strengthened economy.

Equally, they can come as highly talented, experienced and valuable individuals, ready to make a high quality contribution to their new homeland, and fleeing from one where they believe, for some reason – often political or religious, they can’t.
Disadvantages of Immigration:

Immigrants in a society that is different to their own can cause an increase in crime, such as drug trafficking.

Immigrants can become a socio-political threat

Immigration attracts criminals around the world to exploit other countries from a financial, medical and social point of view.

Points to consider ensuring a fruitful, successful debate:

Find out whether or not your country is in favour of, or places barriers in the way of immigration.

Ascertain before speaking whether your country experiences immigration in its society. If so, could your country be considered a ‘melting pot’ or ‘mosaic’?

Be confident!

Resources

Europe:

http://www.hudson-ny.org/239/european-concerns-muslim-immigration

USA:


Asia:

http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?id=733

Canada:


For Country Profiles and lots of other useful information:

http://www.nationsonline.org/oneworld/

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/country_profiles/default.stm

For issues of current international debate:

George Watson’s College MUN Conference 2012
http://www.newint.org/
http://www.idebate.org/
http://www.amnesty.org/

Conditions for gaining awards:

Gaining an award at an MUN Conference is always a confidence booster. Very simply, if you would like to achieve one you will:

Have to submit a position paper (of approximately 50 words outlining your country’s stance on this debate from your country’s point of view) to me by 17th February at the latest

Write a good resolution; whether it comes to ‘pass’ or ‘fail’ does not matter. Effort matters.

Exhibit enthusiasm and try to show confidence.

I trust these guidelines will help you to debate happily and confidently!

Remember, MUN is serious, but can be great fun, too. Enjoy it! I look forward to seeing you all there!

NB: Please send all Position Papers by Friday 17 February at the latest (or you won’t be in line for an award!) or questions to my email address, which is:

mailto:robbie_grindlay@hotmail.com