

VIII. A Different Generation of (Im)migrants: Non-white Ethnics Come to Waterbury

Subject(s):

Time Needed: 50 minute class session

Objectives:

- ✓ add greater depth to their understanding of 20th Century life in Waterbury
- ✓ reading comprehension
- ✓ investigate other cultures

Areas/Disciplines Covered:

African American Studies (history, culture)
Ethnic Studies ((im)migration, Latinos)
History (US, local, diplomatic)
Geography (maps)
Labor History (work)

Materials:

- chalk and chalkboard or markers and chart paper
- narrative handouts, “Capell Bacote” and “Alejandro (Alex) Lopez” in Brecher, Lombardi, and Stackhouse, *Brass Valley: The Story of Working People’s Lives and Struggles in an American Industrial Region*
- US map (including Puerto Rico)

Procedure:

1. Start with a question: “Why do people leave their countries?” Allow the students to name numerous answers. Record each on the board. The transition answer will be that people leave their countries for work. Encourage your students towards that answer.

2. When you’ve come to that answer, ask the students what types of jobs were and are available to people in Waterbury. This will jog their memory of the “Brass City Life” website and other class activities. Some of the jobs include: factory work, construction, teaching, etc.

3. Take the two narrative handouts and begin passing them around. Describe that the two people you will discuss today came to Waterbury for jobs. Both are migrants. Describe the difference between a migrant and an immigrant. Proceed by giving some background information, contextual and personal, such as:

- There have historically been waves of (im)migration to this country and the same is true of Waterbury.
- African American migration has been characterized into two waves, one preceding and during World War I, and another during and following World War II.

- During the first wave, the migrants to Connecticut largely came from the southeastern coastal states such as North and South Carolina and similar to ethnic immigration, they followed family ties.
- The second wave brought more African Americans from different regions of the south including Alabama and Mississippi.
- Puerto Ricans largely came to the US and Connecticut after 1950. They came for jobs and followed family ties where possible.
- Puerto Rico has been under US authority since Spain ceded the island to the US in the Spanish-American War of 1898. Puerto Ricans gained US citizenship rights in 1917.
- Because of individual citizenship and commonwealth status, Puerto Ricans are migrants not immigrants despite the fact that they come from an island. [define commonwealth]

4. Next give the personal background on Bacote and Lopez (found in *Brass Valley*). As is indicative of the migration period they both came for jobs in the many factories that were functioning in 1950s Waterbury. [give examples]

5. Read aloud the narrative portions on the handout.

6. After the reading, highlight the pieces that one, distinguish these narratives from the ethnic immigrant narratives, and two, distinguish them from each other; culture, language, location, and family all play a decisive role in the two men's experiences in Waterbury.

- How are these narratives different from the immigrant narratives?
- How are Bacote and Lopez's experiences here different from each other?
- Do you notice any of their problems still being experienced in Waterbury today? In what way(s)?

Related Resources: