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Interview with David Democ

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Kendra Shamley

American Encounters from 1850

Oral History Research Paper

December 4, 2014

Racism in Modern Germany: An Experience by David Demic

Germany has a stout reputation of being cruel to outsiders, specifically under Nazi control; but it has once again become an issue since the 1970's and 1980's because of rising unemployment among German citizens. The situation is similar to the issue of documented and undocumented immigrants working in the United States: more foreign workers are brought in during times of prosperity and increasing productivity, but when the economy begins to decline and jobs become harder and harder to come by, citizens begin to look at the foreign workforce as a burden rather than an asset. Germany has fairly liberal asylum laws, so when Germany reunited in the early 1990's there was, what can only be described as an awkward clash, between the two halves. West Germany's economy was strong while East Germany's was crashing, which consequently brought West Germany down with it; and the whole crash was exasperated by the influx of Soviet Jewish refugees. Foreign immigrants are often treated like vermin, have threats made against them and usually live in rough areas of the city. There tends to be a greater backlash from existing populations against foreign immigrants in first world countries, but mainly when the economy is under more strain and there are fewer jobs available. This creates stressful situations, builds tension and can create violent situations for some immigrant communities. Many factors affect a person's ability to integrate themselves into a new community, but the main ones tend to be race and economic status. Those with more money, usually through family or education, have an easier time meeting the standards set by the host country. Those without are left to scramble at the bottom of the heap, with little help, few resources and slim chances of climbing out because society has tied one hand behind their back and then chastised them for their lack of attempts to become one of the group. Racism and discrimination are the rope tying the hand behind the back of those seeking to better their lives

and the lives of their families, and unfortunately many people choose to passively avoid the problem.

Annotated Notes of Interview

David introduces himself.

Discusses where he was born, some family history given

Growing up in Germany for David—advantages and disadvantages

About David's mother

Talks about discrimination and racism he and other groups experienced in Germany

David discusses his education

What inspired David to immigrate to America—racism, abuse at home, bullying; education was his main motivation for coming to America

When he got to America

Jobs his mother had, how it affected his work choices and his career choices

David discusses his experiences as being a foreigner all his life

David talks about feeling out of place despite fitting in in Germany with his complexion

Immigration in America, Anglo mindset about what it means to be a native

Economic standpoint about immigration

Changes to American system in the next fifty years; Latino influence, possible hindrances and improvements to system

David's stance on immigration, not sure if he's for or against it

The American Dream, new perspective needed

Advantages to him being a foreigner

Stereotypes American's have of him being German

David's perspective on the Melting Pot idea, pressure to become White

Formation of sub-cultures amongst White culture, experience with Latino sub-culture in Florida during the summer

Give and take between immigrant's culture and the new culture

Prevalence of chickens in Cuba

The Drug War didn't work out well for South or North Americans

The Melting Pot, Oil and Vinegar, Biculturalism-advantages

Cultural and heritage advantages David had

Economic reason for helping people assimilate: better to help them rather than fight them

America was originally very different from Europe, from the mindset to the culture to the hierarchy

Battle of the different shades of White

Diversity will improve America in the long run

David discusses differences between East and West Germany, even today

David's mom's reason for immigrating to Germany: family issues

David tells me an offensive joke

Change in politics in America—politicians are realizing they need the Latino vote

Too little bicameralism between Democrats and Republicans in Washington D.C.

Immigrants are beginning to impact the political climate—Latinos and Mexicans