

# Multiculturalism in the UK and in the USA

## 1 Immigration

### 1.1 The US : a Nation of Immigrants

#### 1. A brief history of immigration to the USA until 1945

Immigration is the process through which individuals become temporary, permanent residents or citizens of a host country. Historically, the process of immigration has been a social, economic and cultural asset to the USA.

Americans share a common experience : they or their forebears (=ancestors) left another country to begin anew in the United-States. Successive immigration waves have occurred since the 16<sup>th</sup> century and it is today considered that about 15% of the US population today was foreign-born. Thus immigration is a defining factor of the American identity.

- Early settlers

The first settlers were mostly Spanish, British and French settlers that left their country for various reasons (exploration, religion or trade). In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the English Puritans left the Old continent when the developing Protestantism caused persecution and established a settlement on the East Coast. In 1620, the *Pilgrim Fathers* left Plymouth in the U.K. Aboard the *Mayflower* and settled in what was to become New England. From then on, many more settlements were established by British emigrants and they were soon to be followed by people from other countries, such as Germany, the Netherlands and Scandinavian nations all over the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1776, the *American Declaration of Independence* was signed and America ceased to exist as a colonial territory.

- The first wave and second wave

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the migration movements gathered momentum and major waves of Europeans travelled across the Atlantic Ocean for the young United-States. It is generally estimated that about 10 million people reached the US from 1839 to 1861. These Northern Europeans longed for professional opportunities in this land of wealth and shared common cultural and religious features which altogether contributed to homogenize the population. After the Civil War (1861-1865), a second wave of immigration occurred, but it was different in nature. Twenty million migrants, mainly from Eastern and Mediterranean Europe, reached the US in 50 years. In 1907 only, more than 1.3 million people sought asylum. This workforce helped develop the US industry so much that by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it had become the world industrial leader.

- Immigration laws

The American government implemented measures to try and control the population flow before and during *World War One*, first by applying restriction on Chinese and Japanese populations (from the 1880s to the 1910s) and then by implementing selection measures, such as the compulsory literacy test on all applicants in 1917. Indeed the USA met difficulties to assimilate so many people and therefore Americans were getting worried about the national cohesion. English-only instruction laws were passed in the late 1880s. From 1906 on, with the *Naturalisation Act*, foreigners had to learn English. Finally quotas of immigrants were introduced privileging Europeans in 1924.

These quota measures were voted in order to try and restore an ethnic balance, but it favoured the people from Anglo-Saxon countries against Southern and Eastern Europeans. Mass emigration

stopped when the 1929 *Great Depression* occurred. In the 1930s and early 1940s, most emigrants that reached the US were Europeans persecuted during the war.

## 2. Immigration since 1945

Since 1945, the origin of immigrants has very much changed, with a majority of people coming from Mexico (about 30% in 2010) and also refugees fleeing war-torn countries. During the 1950s and 1960s, the end of colonization across Asia and Africa was another reason which drove people to emigrate to the USA. The place of settlement also started to shift : from then on newcomers preferred the major cities of California, Florida and Texas to New York.

- Family reunification and skilled migrants

In the 1960s, legislation was passed in order to facilitate the reunification of families, regardless of the immigrants' origins. The 1965 US policy implemented under Lyndon B. Johnson rejected the idea that people from certain national origins were more easily integrated than others. Along with its principled construction of a system dominated by family reunification, Congress embraced the ideal of a US historically open to any person. They rejected admission based on education which would bar the poor (the “huddled masses”) and overly selective admissions which would go against American values. It has broadly remained so since then : more than three quarters of admissions are based on this reform. However, this reform that originally aimed to focus more on family than on merit, caused many would-be immigrants to apply elsewhere, particularly in Canada, which sought skills. Since the 1990s new measures have been implemented to limit the loss of qualified and educated immigrants. In 1990 particularly, the *Family Unity and Employment Opportunity Immigration Act* has enabled to balance skills and family-motivated applications. The number of admitted immigrants soared again, to almost a million a year.

- Barack Obama and the *DREAM Act*

After 2001, admission requirements were tightened because of the threat of terrorism. In 2009 Barack Obama called immigration reform a priority, but he soon faced pressure from immigration advocates to move forward and also from Republicans who wanted to maintain the previous legislation. Obama pushed for comprehensive reform, but the health care bill soon became a political priority. Protest in support of the *DREAM Act (Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors)* brought national attention to the plight of strict immigration laws, but this bill did not pass. Concerning illegal immigration, Democratic administrations have pushed for amnesty for hundred of thousands of illegals and Republican ones have attempted to push for stricter border security against illegal immigration.

- Immigration under D.Trump

After the presidential election of 2016, President Trump pledged to build a wall on the United-States-Mexico border that was to be paid for by the state of Mexico, and he expressed support for applying limits on legal immigration on grounds that official estimates of the number of illegal immigrants are three times lower than in reality. He also expressed opposition to allow Syrian refugees into the US and planned to ban Muslims from entering the country, claiming that they are a threat to national security.

As president, Trump imposed a travel ban that prohibited issuing visas to citizens of seven largely-Muslim countries, expanded to thirteen in 2020. In response to legal challenges he revised the ban twice, with his third version being upheld by the Supreme Court in June 2018. He attempted to end the *Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program*<sup>1</sup> (DACA), put in place by Barack Obama, but a legal injunction has allowed the policy to continue while the matter is the subject of legal challenge. He imposed a "zero tolerance" policy to require the arrest of anyone caught illegally crossing the border, which resulted in separating children from their families. Tim Cook and 58

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<sup>1</sup> Immigration policy that allows some individuals with unlawful presence in the United States after being brought to the country as children to receive a renewable two-year period of deferred action from deportation and become eligible for a work permit in the U.S.

other CEOs of major American companies warned of harm from Trump's immigration policy. The "zero tolerance" policy was reversed in June 2018, but multiple media reports of continued family separations were published in the first half of 2019.

In his first State of the Union address on January 30, 2018, Trump outlined his administration's four pillars for immigration reform: (1) a path to citizenship for DREAMers; (2) increased border security funding; (3) ending the diversity visa lottery; and (4) restrictions on family-based immigration. The Four Pillars reinforce Trump's campaign slogan to "Buy American, Hire American" and 2017 executive order by the same name, and tracks with previously outlined immigration policy priorities.

Under pressure from the Trump Administration, Mexico and other Latin American countries strengthened their efforts to stop illegal immigration to the U.S.<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. The Green card

The Green Card (permanent resident authorization) can be obtained for family, professional or even political motives. Many workers live in the US, either on temporary visas or permanent ones. If they wish to apply for citizenship, they are offered three main possibilities.

- × If they have resided for at least five years on the US territory and are able to justify their residence;
- × If they have an American relative (however, marriage does not necessarily confer citizenship);
- × if they were born in the USA, even of foreign parents (anyone born on the US territory is automatically granted citizenship).

Green card holders are granted permission to live and work in the United-States on a permanent basis. One can become a permanent resident several different ways:

- × Generally applicants are sponsored by a family member in the United-States.
- × Other individuals may become permanent residents through refugee or asylum-seeker status or other humanitarian programs.
- × An employer can recommend an applicant in order to obtain this authorization to work in the US.
- × Finally, a yearly national lottery has been set up to redistribute visas that have not been used by wealthy countries. Anybody with a high school degree can apply. The number of cards available through this specific program is about 50,000 a year, for about 8 million foreign applicants.

President Trump tried to cancel the Green Card lottery in 2017, as part of his immigration reform program, and pushed for a radical reform of the American immigration scheme, however the lottery was still held in 2020.

### 4. The question of refugees

In today's terminology, differences must be made between various motives for migrating to a country : asylum-seeker, refugee and migrant.

- **Refugees** are forced to flee for their lives, while immigrants choose to move to another country. A refugee is a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is forced to live outside of their home countries. There are political, economic and environmental refugees.
- A n **asylum-seeker** has fled his or her country and is asking for protection in another

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2 Source Wikipedia, October 2020.

country: he or she is a claimant seeking refuge and will therefore be termed a refugee only when his or her case has been decided.

- A **migrant** is a person who is outside their country of origin, currently on the move or with temporary status or no status at all in the country where they live. An **economic migrant** moves countries for a job or a better economic future, however migrants' motivations are complex and therefore labelling a migrant as “economic” can be simplistic.

The US has welcomed about 65,000 refugees per year since 2010, mostly from the Near East and South Asia. The United-States recognizes the right of asylum as specified by international and federal law. Refugees compose 10 percent of the annual immigration rate to the United-States, though some large refugee populations are very prominent. Since 1945, more refugees have found home in the US than any other nation in the world. Over two million refugees have arrived in the US since 1980, about 10% of all asylum-seeker admissions in the OECD countries.

Asylum in the US requires that applicants prove persecution in their home country in grounds of race, religion, political opinion or socio-ethnic belonging. They must also establish that the government of their country of origin is either involved in the persecution, or unable to control a situation that threatens their lives.

#### 5. Opposition to immigration policies

It does not come as a surprise that immigration has its detractors in all developed countries. In the United-States, the principal concerns expressed by those opposed to immigration are the economic costs (job competition, threat on education and various social services), the negative environmental impact from accelerated population growth, increasing crime rates, and, in the long run, changes in national identities and values.

According to them, immigration adds to US population growth and decreases salaries, hurting particularly unskilled workers, including previously arrived and integrated immigrants who can be displaced by newcomers willing to work at much lower wages. Opponents to immigration also claim that immigrants benefit from public support to retain their native language and culture, provoking concerns that programs such as bilingual schooling and preferences for minorities contribute to the “disuniting” of America. This has been a key argument of the *Tea Party* in the early 2010s.

While the debate about immigration is often framed in simplistic pro and anti-immigration terms, the reality is somehow different. Immigration can be more effectively seen as series of trade-offs between competing advantages. For example, it is often argued that large-scale immigration is necessary to “save” social security system in the industrial countries. Immigration can indeed play a role in increasing social security revenues by adding more taxpayers than beneficiaries, but much higher levels of immigration would be needed to make a difference in the demography of the country. For instance, Canada has built its modern immigration scheme on that basis, and has recently encouraged more and more people from around the world to join in the integration process in the country in order to balance the demographic pyramid.

In the 1980s economic models and theories asserted that immigrants enabled long-term benefits, but at the cost of short-term difficulties and costs in the form of lower wages and greater unemployment for natives. It has been proved in the 2000s that immigrants bring long-term benefits at no measurable short-term cost. In the end, immigration in the USA is bound up with economic growth itself. Growth through immigration goes with few downsides. When people leave developing countries, they become more economically productive when working in the USA because they take professional assimilation as a personal challenge. They achieve higher standards of living and add economic value to the country.

## 1.2 The UK and immigration

### 1. Facts and Figures

The British 2001 census reported that 7.9% of the population in Britain is from a minority ethnic group. There were 2.33 million British Asians, making up 4% of the UK population.

According to the census, most of the population of the UK (71.7%) identified themselves as Christian. The second largest religious population was Muslims with 3.0%. Hindus, Sikhs, Jews and Buddhist respectively account for 1.1%, 0.6%, 0.5%, 0.3% of the total population. Nearly a quarter of the population did not state any religion.

English is spoken by the great majority of the population (about 95%). However, Wales had two official languages, Welsh and English. In addition, Celtic languages are spoken in Cornwall (Cornish), the Isle of Man (Manx), western and northern Scotland (Scottish Gaelic) and Ireland (Irish).

### 2. A nation of immigrants

The UK has a long history of migration, and newcomers have settled there for various reasons, ranging from the expansion of the Roman Empire to war or destitution. Immigration to the UK dates back to the first millennium, with groups such as the Celts, many Romans, and people from Northern Europe (the Danes, Angles and Saxons).

Later came immigrants who sought to escape political or religious persecution or were in search of better economic opportunities :

- in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Britain welcomed Jews from Russia and Poland who were persecuted in their native countries, as well as Irish people fleeing poverty.
- After World War II, immigrants from the Commonwealth – India, the West Indies, and a few African countries – flowed into the country; as the Commonwealth, had taken part in the war effort, the UK welcomed them with open arms.
- In the 1950s, Asians from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh came to the UK.
- In the 1970s, East African, Asians and Vietnamese, all of whom were trying to escape persecution and war, emigrated to the UK.
- From 1990 onwards, the country experienced a growth in asylum seekers applications.
- With the enlargement of the European Union in the 2000s, Britain saw a surge in economic migration from Eastern Europe.

### 3. The Migrants Crisis

- Definition

The **European migrant crisis**, also known as the **refugee crisis**, was a period characterised by high numbers of people arriving in the European Union (EU) overseas from across the Mediterranean Sea or overland through Southeast Europe. In March 2019, the *European Commission* declared the migrant crisis to be at an end.

The migrant crisis was part of a pattern of increased immigration to Europe from other continents which began in the mid-20th century. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) observed that from January 2015 to March 2016, the top three nationalities among over one million refugees arriving from the Mediterranean

Sea were Syrian (46.7%), Afghan (20.9%) and Iraqi (9.4%).

Many refugees that arrived in Italy and Greece came from countries where armed conflict was ongoing (Syrian civil war (2011–present), War in Afghanistan (2001–present), Iraqi conflict (2003–present)) or which otherwise were considered to be "refugee-producing" and for whom international protection is needed. However, a smaller proportion was from elsewhere, and for many of these individuals, the term "migrant" would be correct.

Of the migrants arriving in Europe by sea in 2015, 58% were males over 18 years of age (77% of adults), 17% were females over 18 (22% of adults) and the remaining 25% were under 18. By religious affiliation, the majority of entrants were Muslim, with a small component of non-Muslim minorities (including Yazidis, Assyrians and Mandaeans). The number of deaths at sea rose to record levels in April 2015, when five boats carrying approximately 2,000 migrants to Europe sank in the Mediterranean Sea, with the combined death toll estimated at more than 1,200 people. The shipwrecks took place during conflicts and refugee crises in several Greater Middle Eastern and African countries, which increased the total number of forcibly displaced people worldwide at the end of 2014 to almost 60 million, the highest level since World War II.<sup>3</sup>

- reactions in Britain

During the Brexit referendum campaign, immigration became a conclusive issue. At the opinion polls, public responded leaving the EU was "more likely to bring about a better immigration system, improved border controls, a fairer welfare system, better quality of life, and the ability to control our own laws." Also at the opinion polls, public responded leaving the EU "offered the best chance for the UK to regain control over immigration and its own borders".

Migration crisis was a defining issue in the "Leave campaign", giving a sharper focus to the slogan of "taking back control" and opposition to EU law and European human rights law, both giving rights to "foreigners" which were deemed unacceptable by many conservatives as well as those further to the right. The crisis created the image of a Union unable to handle the situation, and "Leave" campaigners raised the spectre of Turkish people [they generally did not distinguish between different categories of migrants] gaining freedom of movement.

Further reading :

The migrants crisis explained in 7 charts : <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-32395181>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/migrant-crisis/>

the migrant crisis and the pandemic : <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/08/28/europe/europe-migrants-coronavirus-intl/index.html>

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53925209>

## 2 Multiculturalism

### 2.1 in the USA

1. Melting pot country

No country in the world would be associated ideologically with immigration as the United States today. Its original motto, *E Pluribus Unum* illustrates this will to integrate immigrants. Refugee and

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<sup>3</sup> Wikipedia, October 2020.

opportunity are and have always been the founding stones of their multicultural identity as well as a mutual advantage for the wealth of the country despite the falsehoods that some hatred-filled politicians seem to have people believe. Newcomers are aiming to be integrated in the US through a theory termed the melting pot.

The term melting pot refers to people from different countries with their own culture united within a homogeneous society. According to this principle, people lose the specificities of their native culture and become integrated in their host country. This helps promote cultural standards so that they share a same language for instance. As President Theodore Roosevelt had to face a major influx of immigrants from Asia and Europe in 1919, he declared : “We have room for but one language in this country, and that is the English language.”

However, the loss of roots led some communities to criticize this lack of multiculturalism. That is why some of them rejected the mainstream culture and referred to another theory, the salad bowl, according to which the various cultures that make up a society are brought together, like salad ingredients, but do not mix together into a single homogeneous culture. Each culture keeps its own distinctive qualities.

The 1967 *Bilingual Education Act* led to English being adopted as a possible second language for newcomers. But this act was considered as dangerous for the unity of the nation. It was then replaced in 2002 by the *No Child Left Behind* measures, which showed the difficulty to come up with a common language policy. Added to this, the creation of the expression “hyphenated America”, used by immigrants to claim for their origins, illustrated a risk of fragmentation of the American society. In the 1980s, the English language was given an official status as the sole language, particularly in the administration.

## 2. The struggle for Civil Rights and new forms of activism

Racial discrimination is probably one of the most contentious issues in America today. Several studies have pointed out pervasive inequalities which affect minorities, especially African Americans, in employment, education and income. Historical factors contributed to this situation.

- The legacy of slavery

With nearly 4 million African Americans held in bondage before the beginning of the Civil War, the election of Abraham Lincoln, whose avowed purpose was to curb the extension of slavery, was bound to have a tremendous impact. After 7 States seceded and established the Confederacy, the *Emancipation Proclamation* issued by the 16<sup>th</sup> American president in 1863 infuriated slave states. After the end of the war in 1865, former slaves were supposed to be granted equal rights with whites through the passing of the **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment** which came into effect in 1865. However, the official end of slavery was by no means the onset of equal rights for African Americans. The 1880s saw the advent of a system of legal segregation barring blacks from exercising their newly acquired rights, the **Jim Crow Laws**. Between 1877 and the 1960s, these laws buttressed the inferior position of blacks, preventing them from using the same facilities as whites<sup>4</sup>.

- the fight against discrimination

The creation of the **National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People** or **NAACP** in 1910 laid the foundations of black activism but the political fight climaxed from the mid 1950s onwards, as notable civil rights activists used various non-violent means, ranging from demonstrations to marches and from sit-ins to boycotts to protest unfair treatment of African Americans. In 1954, the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown vs Board of Education* declared segregation in schools unconstitutional, ushering in an era of social progress. Other key landmarks in the long march to equal rights include the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and Martin Luther

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<sup>4</sup> In agreement with the « separate but equal » doctrine confirmed in the Plessy vs. Ferguson Supreme Court ruling of 1896, toilets, waiting rooms, buses, schools, etc. could be segregated in the USA until the sixties.

King's famous speech "I have a dream", delivered after the March on Washington in 1963.

The unremitting struggle of activists brought about the passing in 1964 of the *Civil Rights Act* called for by John Fitzgerald Kennedy and eventually signed into law by Lyndon Johnson after Kennedy's assassination. It was extended by the 1965 *Voting Rights Act* which overruled all forms of disenfranchisement, making the 13<sup>th</sup> amendment as true as its word.

Despite legislation, segregation's impact had been so far-reaching that further action was required in order to tackle the pervasive inequalities thwarting African American advances in American society. That's why affirmative action was implemented after the 1960s. It was supposed to make up for past discriminations by offering minorities privileges conditions of access to universities or public jobs.

Likewise, bussing was aimed at curbing the geographic segregation which existed de facto in many American cities. Local authorities set up bus services transporting pupils outside their neighbourhoods in order to promote racial integration and enhance racial diversity in schools. This measure was criticized as costly and impractical.

- current issues

Despite the gains of the Civil Rights era, and the election of the first black American President in 2008, racial resentment still festers nowadays.

Notwithstanding the emergence of a black middle class in the 1980s, the wealth gap remains substantial : a quarter of black people live below the poverty-line. Black Americans were among the hardest hit by the economic crisis in 2008 and their unemployment rates are twice as high as the national average. Besides the achievement gap is persistent: African Americans still score lower on average than their white counterparts.

Yet the most sensitive issue is currently the strained relationship between the Afro-American community and law enforcement. Figures published in several surveys confirm that racial prejudice in the police forces especially cripples the black population. Indeed, black drivers are more likely to be pulled over by patrols than any other ethnic groups and searches of their vehicles also disproportionately outnumber whites'. The problem goes by the nickname of DWB (driving while black).

Besides, and more tragically, there have been examples galore of police officers killing unarmed African American citizens over the last few years. The most publicized examples include Freddie Gray, Eric Garner or 12-year-old Tamir Rice. Mickael Brown's polemic death in Ferguson, Missouri even sparked lingering outbreaks of violence, which the black community vented its rage at racial profiling. More recently in 2020, George Floyd suffocated to death after Rochester police held him to the ground for several minutes and in Texas Jonathan Price was shot dead after interrupting a fight between a man and a woman in the street.

Besides African Americans are overrepresented behind bars and also in death rows. In states across the country, African Americans are disproportionately represented on death row and among those who have been executed. Black people make up 13 percent of the population, but they make up 42 percent of death row and 35 percent of those executed<sup>5</sup>.

All in all, assessing the extent of racial bias in police enforcement remains a difficult task as many factors come into play, but its existence is incontestable, as evidenced by a blistering 2016 report from the Baltimore police.

- new forms of activism

As a result of the surge in racial tensions, new forms of activism have come to the forefront. In the aftermath of the acquittal of the police officer prosecuted for killing Trayvon Martin, the "Black Lives Matter" movement was created so as to organize rallies against police brutality. Detractors

5 <https://www.naacp.org/latest/naacp-death-penalty-fact-sheet/>

accuse this loose network of activists of stirring up resentment and hatred against the police, and BLM more particularly came under fire after a Dallas gunman shot 5 white police officers in the line of duty during a protest.

Meanwhile, several public figures voiced their concerns about inequalities affecting black Americans, such as NFL athlete Colin Kaepernick, who took a stance on racial issues by refusing to stand during the national anthem before matches. His move was decried by those considering his civil disobedience disrespectful of the flag, but other athletes emulated him in local or national competitions.

Today the heirs of the Civil Rights movement also rely on social media to convey their message. The hashtag #Oscarssowhite was thus launched to denounce the lack of racial diversity in the Academy nomination in both 2015 and 2016.

In June 2020, protestors defaced several statues all over the world, on the grounds that the individuals they represent are part and parcel of the oppressive system they are denouncing.

Cedric Johnson, a professor at Illinois University in Chicago claims that blacks do not account for the majority of victims of violence, even though they are overrepresented. In 2015, 1138 people were killed by the police, among which 581 were Whites, 306 Afro-Americans, 195 Latinos, 24 Asians, 13 native Americans and 27 of unknown ethnical origin. Police violence is in fact aimed more generally at people from underprivileged classes, the jobless, the homeless, the petty thieves who are more likely to be watched and arrested by the police.

### 3. Affirmative action

The term “affirmative action – first introduced by President Kennedy in 1961 – refers to various government policies that aim to eliminate past discrimination against women and minorities through various programs to ensure equal opportunity in three major fields : employment, education and culture. Affirmative action policies initially focused on improving employment opportunities for African Americans. In recent years, the focus has been laid on education, in an attempt to promote greater diversity. Because it implies a preferential treatment – granted simply on the basis of race, gender or ethnicity – affirmative action is one of the most controversial issues in the US; even the Supreme Court is divided over it.

- Arguments for and against affirmative action

Advocates of these policies believe that they help redress the wrongs and injustices caused by years of discrimination and guarantee equal opportunities for all American citizens. They believe it is a way for many men and women to gain access to positions that would be otherwise out of their reach. Critics, on the other hand, argue that the idea of quotas and any type of preferential selection is outdated; according to them, affirmative action fosters division and racial tensions, strengthens stereotypes and causes reverse discrimination – in other words, inequalities are not erased but barely shifted, which leads to unfair treatment of the majority. Detractors also believe they run counter to the principle of merit that has shaped American democracy; when it comes to university admissions, a minority applicant may for instance be favoured over a white student with better grades. What has been dubbed “mismatch” can then occur : students are admitted into universities for which they are relatively ill-prepared and therefore end up struggling; they may develop self-confidence issues and sometimes even drop out. Besides, the economic factor is completely overlooked in preference policies : some minorities still benefit from the programs even though they no longer need them; for instance many black students nowadays come from middle or upper-class families. The economic crisis left many white Americans in dire circumstances, and some argue that it is now these low-income families who should be aided. Despite the controversy, a 2015 poll found that a majority of Americans still favour affirmative action programs (but support is stronger for programs promoting gender equality).

- the backlash against affirmative action

In 1941, Roosevelt coined the phrase “affirmative action” in Executive Order 8802, which prohibited segregation in employment. President Lyndon B. Johnson was one of the most prominent architect of preference policies and affirmative action was at the core of the Great Society<sup>6</sup> he had envisioned; in 1961, he signed Executive Order 10925, which sought to limit inequalities of employment. By the mid 1980s, an anti-affirmative action movement gained ground and although it did not remove former Executive Orders, it did not allow any further legislation to be passed. The Reagan administration firmly opposed preferential treatment and between 1981 and 1983, drastic cuts were made in the budget devoted to these policies. Some major Supreme Court rulings in the late 1980s also contributed to substantially dwindling affirmative action programs. In the mid-1990s, the Republican-controlled US Congress, along with court decisions, continued to dismantle the programs. Under President Clinton, the Republicans kept calling for the end of affirmative action; Clinton responded by stressing the importance of preference programs and announced his policy of “Mend it, don't end it”. Claiming to be against quotas, he pledged to review affirmative action programs in order to determine whether they were applied fairly or not. The issue remained debated despite Clinton's action. In recent years nine states have banned preferential treatment on the basis of gender or race in university admissions : Oklahoma, New Hampshire, Arizona, Nebraska, Washington, California, Florida, Texas and Michigan.

- the position of the Supreme Court

Justice Sonia Sotomayor<sup>7</sup> has described herself as a pure product of affirmative action policies, whereas Chief Justice John Roberts (nominated by G.W. Bush in 2005), a staunch conservative, seeks to achieve a “colourblind” society – in which no distinction or difference of treatment based on race is made; the principle of colour blindness implies that race should not affect admissions or hiring processes. Roberts even went as far as to say : “the way to stop discrimination on the basis of race is to stop discriminating on the basis of race.” The Court has generally followed a moderate line and is clearly against strict quotas.

Some major Supreme Court rulings :

- Regents of the University of California v. Bakke (1976) : the court ruled in favour of Bakke, a white man who was twice denied admission to a medical school, despite having better grades and test scores than minority students who got in.
- Grutter v. Bollinger and Gratz v. Bollinger (2003): the Court argued that considering race in admissions processes was admissible, provided it was done with caution. Justice Sandra Day O'Connor voiced the Court's opinion that within 25 years, affirmative action would hopefully no longer be needed.
- Fisher v. University of Texas (2016) : the court ruled that the University of Texas' programs were in keeping with the Constitution.

#### 4. Other ethnic minorities

- facts and figures

As of July 2016, White Americans are the racial majority. Hispanic and Latino Americans are the largest ethnic minority, comprising an estimated 18% of the population. African Americans are the second largest racial minority, comprising an estimated 13.4% of the population. The White, non-

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6 The « Great Society » was President Johnson's far-reaching set of programs meant to promote equality and social justice ; he launched a « War against Poverty », which was to form the core of the reform and implemented the Economic Opportunity Act (civil rights and social welfare with Medicare and Medicaid).

7 First Hispanic and third female Supreme Court Justice. She was appointed in 2009 by President Obama. Raised in the Bronx, she experienced poverty in her childhood, yet rose to be a lawyer, then a judge.

Hispanic or Latino population make up 61% of the nation's total, with the total White population (including White Hispanics and Latinos) being 77%.

White Americans are the majority in every census-defined region (Northeast, Midwest, South, West) and in every state except Hawaii, but contribute the highest proportion of the population in the [Midwestern United States](#). Non-Hispanic Whites make up 79% of the Midwest's population, the highest ratio of any region. However, 35% of White Americans (whether all White Americans or non-Hispanic/Latino only) live in the South, the most of any region.

Currently, 55% of the African American population lives in the South. A plurality or majority of the other official groups reside in the West. The latter region is home to 42% of Hispanic and Latino Americans, 46% of Asian Americans, 48% of American Indians and Alaska Natives, 68% of Native Hawaiians and Other Pacific Islanders, 37% of the "two or more races" population (Multiracial Americans), and 46% of those self-designated as "some other race".<sup>8</sup>

- current issues

According to a study by the Pew Research Center, 52% of Latinos reported experiencing unfair treatment owing to their race. With the highest drop-out rate, they are more likely to hold low-paid jobs, which contributes to the wealth gap between Hispanics and the white majority. Moreover, due to the influx of illegal Mexican immigrants across the border, Latinos are frequently stopped by the police for immigration status controls. D.Trump's frequent attacks and insults against the Latino community illustrates the anti-hispanic feeling which pervades American society as a whole.

Muslims were confronted with a surge in prejudice in the USA in the wake of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Indeed Islam came to be wrongfully confused with terrorism, which gave rise to distrust as well as a rising number of hate crimes towards this community. When he was elected, D.Trump pledged to restrict immigration from Muslim countries.

The Asian minority is usually considered the least discriminated minority. It was not always the case however, as evidenced by the existence of internment camps for citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. Sometimes nicknamed the “model minority” in virtue of their generally more favourable lot, Asians are on the whole better educated and more affluent than other minorities. Yet they have expressed growing dissatisfaction with the hurdles they have to overcome to climb the corporate ladder or to enroll in prestigious universities.

Indigenous peoples of the Americas, particularly Native Americans, made up 0.8% of the population in 2008, numbering 2.4 million. An additional 2.3 million persons declared part-American Indian or Alaska Native ancestry. Once thought to face extinction as a race or culture, Native Americans of numerous tribes have achieved revival of aspects of their cultures, together with asserting their sovereignty and direction of their own affairs since the mid-20th century. Many have started language programs to revive use of traditional languages; some have established tribally controlled colleges and other schools on their reservations, so that education is expressive of their cultures. Since the late 20th century, many tribes have developed gaming casinos on their sovereign land to raise revenues for economic development, as well as to promote the education and welfare of their people through health care and construction of improved housing.

## **2.2 in the UK**

### 1. The 20<sup>th</sup> century : evolution towards a multicultural society

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the UK has gradually become more socially and culturally diverse. The landmark 1948 *British Nationality Act* represented a turning point : in creating a new legal status – Citizenship of the UK and Colonies – , the Act allowed the citizens of the Commonwealth to settle in Britain, therefore paving the way for the emergence of a truly multicultural society. By the mid-

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<sup>8</sup> Wikipedia, October 2020.

1960s, the UK had ruled out assimilation policies and adopted integration: acts against racial discrimination – such as the 1965 and 1968 *Race Relations Acts* – then came into force, and the prevailing idea was that people had a right to their particular traditions and cultural expressions. In the early 1980s, the Thatcher government continued on the path, actively promoting cultural policies through the funding of local projects that responded to the needs of the different ethnic, cultural and religious groups. Multiculturalism therefore became institutionalized : lawmakers now openly supported and enforced a set of multicultural policies. In the nineties, these policies took on a whole new dimension, with Tony Blair's New Labour government pledging to radically revise the immigration laws in order to transform Britain into a much more multicultural society. The cornerstone of Labour's legislation was passed in 1998 : *The Human Rights Act* was to make it much more difficult to deport asylum-seekers. However, despite enduring efforts at encouraging cultural diversity, racial tensions were never erased and sometimes escalated into riots – a case in point is the 1981 outburst of violence in Brixton (South London), followed in 2011 by another period of social unrest, after the police shooting of a young man of mixed race, Mark Duggan.

## 2. The debate over the multicultural approach

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the multicultural debate even took a new turn : the two terror attacks on America and Britain in 2001 and 2005 (9/11 and 7/7, the London Bombings) changed the way many Britons viewed people from the ethnic minorities and this fueled the success of far-right organisations such as the *British National Party* or *Ukip*. In his famous 1968 “Rivers of Blood” speech, right-wing politician Enoch Powell had warned of the dangers, as he saw them, of unchecked immigration. According to him, uncontrolled immigration would irrevocably damage Great Britain. His speech was harshly criticized by the leaders of his own party and ended his career, yet it is still praised by far-right parties today.

- David Cameron's position against multiculturalism

Besides many voices are now being raised against the multicultural approach, arguing that it has only resulted in antagonizing communities and had therefore contributed to the rise of extremist parties. Former Prime Minister David Cameron repeatedly attacked the multicultural model in landmark speeches. In 2008, he said : “It means treating groups of people as monolithic blocks rather than individual citizens.” Branding multiculturalism as a tool of the left, he added : “Multiculturalism was manipulated to entrench the right to difference – which is a divisive concept. What we need is the right to equal treatment despite difference.” His 2011 speech provoked a political storm : he claimed that British multiculturalism had failed and encouraged segregation. He referred to the “doctrine of state multiculturalism” as a strategy that had encouraged different cultures to live separate lives, apart from each other, and apart from the mainstream”. In January 2016, he reasserted his position: “all too often, because of what I would call 'passive tolerance', people subscribe to the flawed idea of separate development...It is time to change our approach.”

- the new face of multiculturalism

Amidst the controversy, some view Sadiq Khan, the Mayor of London, as the new face of multicultural Britain. On May 6, 2016, voters indeed made history by electing Labour Party's Sadiq Khan as their mayor – the city's first Muslim mayor. In his victory speech, Khan spoke of his humble origins on a council estate and pledged to be a mayor “for all Londoners”.

## 3. The case of London

- a diverse city

It may be argued that the population of London is hardly representative of Britain : London is more diverse, wealthier and younger than the rest of the UK. The capital is one of the world's most

multicultural cities and 2016 statistics have shown that its population is expected to near 10 million people within a decade – a growth that is largely due to immigration. About a quarter of the city's inhabitants are foreign-born, one in eight is a Muslim. Therefore, opposition to immigration is less pronounced in London than in the rest of the country: over half of the London population say immigration benefits the economy, against over a quarter for the rest of the UK and the thriving multiculturalism has culminated in the election of Sadiq Khan as London Mayor.

- Contrast with rest of the country

However, recent terror attacks have rekindled the debate over multiculturalism : they have come to undermine the idea that a genuine community cohesion is possible. Besides, London does not really mirror the overall UK economy; the capital is truly a global economic hub which transcends national origins, and it is growing faster than the rest of the UK while concentrating all services and institutions. The city's striking dominance is not only cultural and economic : unlike New York, London is at the same time the seat of political power and home to Britain's central bureaucracy. Hence the growing sense that the City is doing all the decision-making at the expense of the provinces. In June 2014 the Prime Minister said that for too long the UK economy had been “too London-focused and too centralised”, yet the cultural and economic imbalance persists and the governing class is increasingly viewed as a “metropolitan elite” and described as “London-centric” - primarily and exclusively concerned with London. The city's dominance has contributed to widening the gap between the electorate and country leaders.

- Deprived areas and growing racism

Besides, not all Londoners benefit from the prosperity if the capital and the capital is faced with a variety of problems – ranging from housing shortages, security issues, pollution and crime, to the exploitation of new workers and migrants, unemployment and homelessness. A 2013 report pointed to the stark economic inequalities that affect the city, showing that 28% of its inhabitants lived below the poverty-line. At least two of its boroughs rank among the ten most deprived in England. It is no coincidence if the 2011 riots were centered on London, and if far-right movements and parties such as UKIP are gaining ground in areas where the white working class feels isolated and left out. Therefore, if London is undeniably a truly multicultural city, it is also at odds with the rest of the country on many different levels, which has fostered increasing unease and resentment among the British population; the anti-elitist sentiment probably led many Britons to vote for Brexit.

The Brexit vote was symptomatic of a decline in social cohesion, of the frustration of the white working class and of a growing resentment towards the elite. It revealed a widespread of fear, discontent, and hostility towards the minorities. It might be exaggerated to claim that Britain is witnessing a failure of multiculturalism; yet, the British identity is undeniably being questioned.