

MONDAY EXTRA**Return Flight****OVERVIEW**

Mexicans and other Latin Americans, who often sneak into the U.S. on foot, are the face of today's rancorous debate over illegal immigration. But increasingly, other groups of undocumented immigrants are being swept up, too. They are people who came to the U.S. on planes, with valid visas and passports from Ireland, India, Poland or elsewhere. They stayed in the country after those visas expired, and eluded detection by immigration authorities as they went about their lives, often laying down roots in their new communities.

REVIEW

Read the article "Return Flight" and answer these questions:

- 1 How are immigration officials handling the task of catching immigrants who overstay their visas?

- 2 Why do supporters of the crackdown on visa violators argue that it's necessary?

- 3 What do critics of the program say?

DISCUSSION/WRITING IDEAS

■ More than any other nation, the U.S. has claimed immigration as a central feature of its national identity. Yet the focus of its immigration laws has varied widely through history, depending on the political and economic climates. What should be the primary focus of immigration policy today? To ensure national security? To ensure respect for the law? To ensure job security for American citizens? Or should it be to provide a steady supply of workers for American farms and businesses? To repopulate urban areas? To provide a refuge for the world's downtrodden? Discuss as a class.

■ Emma Lazarus's poem "The New Colossus," part of which is imprinted on the base of the Statue of Liberty, reflects a glorified view of America's attitude toward immigrants. It reads in part:

*Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

Think about the American public's perspectives on immigration today and write a new verse of the Lazarus poem that accurately reflects this reality.

■ Consider the circumstances of the Andrezej Derezinski case, including his reasons for overstaying his visa and his actions since. If you were an immigration judge with final say on his deportation case, how would you rule? Write a statement of your opinion, in which you address these questions: What would the practical effect of your decision be? How would your ruling be interpreted by other immigrants in similar circumstances? How would it be viewed by native U.S. citizens, or by legal immigrants? Should enforcement of immigration law be absolute or flexible?

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ANSWERS

1 U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has tried to get local police to help enforce federal laws by nabbing these immigrants on an unrelated offense, such as a traffic infraction.

2 Supporters of the latest crackdown say it is long overdue. They say many illegal immigrants, including visa overstayers, have been given a free pass by the government, thanks to lax enforcement.

3 Critics say the federal government is diverting local police from basic priorities, like community safety, to arrest immigrants who usually don't pose a security threat. The strategy can also lead to ethnic profiling, they say, because police officers might be more likely to run checks on people who have accents or who they think look foreign.