

# Historical Journal of Massachusetts



## ARTICLES

SUMMER 2018

Boston's New Immigrants and New  
Economy, 1965-2015

MARILYNN S. JOHNSON

Romancing the Stone: Invented Irish and  
Native American Memories in Northampton

ROBERT E. WEIR

When the Chinese Came to Massachusetts:  
Representations of Race, Labor, Religion,  
and Citizenship in the 1870 Press

MARY M. CRONIN

Hatfield's Forgotten Past: The Porter-  
McLeod Machine Tool Company and  
the Connecticut River Valley Industrial  
Economy, 1870-1970

ROBERT FARRANT

## BOOK REVIEWS



Institute for Massachusetts Studies  
Westfield State University

# *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*

**Summer 2018**

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577 Western Avenue  
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Website: [www.westfield.ma.edu/mhj](http://www.westfield.ma.edu/mhj)  
E-mail: [masshistoryjournal@westfield.ma.edu](mailto:masshistoryjournal@westfield.ma.edu)

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This PDF provides a sample glimpse into an issue of the *Historical Journal of Massachusetts*. The article “Boston’s New Immigrants and New Economy, 1965-2015” is included in this excerpt from the Summer 2018 issue, following the front pages. The other articles in this issue can be found under the “Article Archive” tab on the *HJM* website at <https://www.westfield.ma.edu/historical-journal/>.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

The *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* (HJM) is a peer-reviewed journal published twice a year by the Institute for Massachusetts Studies at Westfield State University. We offer articles, book reviews, photo essays, and teaching resources about Massachusetts history, culture, politics, and peoples. Our focus ranges from political history to labor and social history; ethnic, immigrant, and women's studies; biography and public history.

As the only scholarly journal devoted exclusively to the history of Massachusetts, HJM fills an important role in preserving the state's rich cultural heritage. Massachusetts has often been at the forefront of national reform struggles, from the abolition of slavery to public education and worker's rights. We seek to highlight this "people's history" through a focus on the history of reform movements and social change.

We cover all topics and aspects of the Commonwealth's past—from its Native American heritage through its colonial and revolutionary roots to the present. We strive to include all fields of history, including political, social, cultural, economic, labor, legal, and immigration. We highlight the unique histories of specific groups, including women's history, along with the diverse experiences of the state's many ethnic and minority communities.

In addition, each issue includes a "Photo Essay" along with an "Editor's Choice" selection that offers our readers excerpts from especially significant and groundbreaking recent works. Other features include a "Teaching Resources" section that offers articles and lesson plans on the teaching of Massachusetts history designed especially for secondary and middle school teachers.

We invite you to contribute by becoming a subscriber, author, book reviewer, and/or patron. Contributions from novice authors as well as established historians are welcomed. At \$12.00 annually, HJM is one of the least expensive scholarly journals, thanks to the generosity of our many patrons and the support of Westfield State University. If you enjoy this issue, please consider making a contribution.

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Professor of History  
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### LAWRENCE T. AND DONNA J. GWOZDZ GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP

Westfield State University alumni Larry Gwozdz (WSU 1969) has made a significant gift in support of HJM. This gift will fund the Lawrence T. and Donna J. Gwozdz Graduate Assistantship. This will be the first time in the journal's history that we will have a full-time graduate assistant to provide greatly-needed administrative support. More information on Mr. Gwozdz and his extremely generous gift will be forthcoming in the next issue. He is proud to be able to help a young person pursue graduate studies at WSU with a full graduate assistantship that covers both course tuition and fees along with a stipend.

The *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* is greatly enriched by the many contributions of our Advisory Board members. They provide invaluable assistance with proofreading, copy editing, and peer review.

## THANKING OUR PATRONS

The *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* gratefully acknowledges support from the following individuals and institutions who have donated at least \$50 to help preserve the historical and cultural heritage of Massachusetts. Since 1972, our patrons' generosity has been indispensable to our existence. HJM operates on a shoestring budget that depends on dozens of unpaid volunteers as well as student interns. Our patrons' contributions are essential; we thank them for their ongoing support. Many have contributed annually for over a decade. We hope that you will consider joining them.

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### **About Westfield State University**

Founded in 1838 under the leadership of Horace Mann, Westfield State University is an education leader committed to providing every generation of students with a learning experience built on its founding principles. Westfield was the first co-educational college in the United States to offer an education without barrier to race, creed or economic status. This spirit of innovative thinking and social responsibility is forged in a curriculum of liberal arts and professional studies that creates a vital community of engaged learners who become confident, capable individuals prepared for leadership and service to society.

## MEET OUR AUTHORS

SUMMER 2018

**Mary M. Cronin** (legally Mary M. Lamonica) is an Associate Professor in the Department of Journalism and Mass Communications at New Mexico State University. A former reporter and editor prior to receiving her Ph.D. at Michigan State University in 1993, she has interests in nineteenth-century press performance, portrayals of minorities, and freedom of expression. Professor Cronin is the editor of *An Indispensable Liberty: The Fight for Free Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2016).

**Robert Farrant** is University of Massachusetts, Lowell Professor of History specializing in labor, immigration, and industrial history. Coordinator of the University's history master's degree program, he is author of several books and articles, including *The Great Lawrence Textile Strike of 1912* (2014), *The Big Move: Immigrant Voices from a Mill City* (2011), and *Metal Fatigue: American Bosch and the Demise of Metalworking in the Connecticut River Valley* (2008). A 2015 recipient of the Massachusetts Endowment for the Humanities History Commendation, he's been a scholar on several Mass Humanities- and National Endowment for the Humanities-funded projects. Before working at UMass Lowell, he spent nearly fifteen years as a machinist in Springfield, Massachusetts and for four of those years served as elected Business Agent for the International Union of Electrical Workers Local 206.

**Marilynn S. Johnson** is a professor of history at Boston College. Her work focuses on urban social relations in late nineteenth and twentieth-century America. She teaches courses on social movements, urban and working-class history, violence, and the American West. Her earlier work looked at internal migration during World War II, police brutality, and violence on the mining and cattle frontiers. More recently she has addressed international migration trends. She is a co-editor of *What's New about the "New" Immigration? Traditions and Transformations in the United States Since 1965* (NY, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014). Her latest book, *The New Bostonians*, explores the history of new immigrants in greater Boston since the 1960s. She is now launching a digital history project and website on Boston area immigration.

**Robert E. Weir** is a retired history professor who most recently taught at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. He is the author and/or editor of

six books and co-author of a seventh, including *Beyond Labor's Veil: The Culture of the Knights of Labor* (Penn State Press, 1996), *Knights Unhorsed: Internal Conflict in a Gilded Age Social Movement* (Wayne State University Press, 2000), *Knights Down Under: The Knights of Labour in New Zealand* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2009), and *Workers in America: A Historical Encyclopedia* (ABC-CLIO, 2013). Weir has published scores of articles and reviews. He is the executive secretary of the Northeast Popular/American Culture Association and a volunteer with Historic Northampton.

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# THE NEW Bostonians



HOW IMMIGRANTS HAVE TRANSFORMED  
THE METRO REGION SINCE THE 1960S

MARILYNN S. JOHNSON

**EDITOR'S CHOICE**

## Boston's New Immigrants and New Economy, 1965-2015

MARILYNN S. JOHNSON



**Editor's Introduction:** HJM is proud to select as our Editor's Choice Award for this issue Marilyn S. Johnson's superb study, *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s*, published by the University of Massachusetts Press in 2015. After World War II, the greater Boston area experienced dramatic economic and demographic decline. The population plummeted from 801,444 in 1950 to 641,071 in 1970, a 20% drop. Since the 1980s, however, the city has witnessed a renaissance, a phenomenon similar to what has occurred in many other major urban areas. Marilyn S. Johnson argues that immigrants have contributed to this renaissance in numerous yet often overlooked ways. She writes, "Although often told as a story of corporate restructuring, technological innovation and elite-led gentrification, Boston's metropolitan transformation required a far broader cast of characters."<sup>1</sup>

*The background statistics are revealing. Boston has the sixth-highest proportion of foreign-born residents among the twenty-five largest U.S. cities. Between 1990 and 2010, Boston's foreign-born population grew from 114,597 to 167,311. Immigrants now account for 26.7% of the city's residents, up from 20% in 1990 and 13% in 1970. This is nearly twice the Massachusetts state percentage of 14%. Some suburbs had an even higher percentage of foreign-born in 2010: Chelsea (45%), Malden (41%), and Lynn (30%). And East Boston had a population of over 50% foreign-born. Between 1990 and 2010, the percentage of Boston residents speaking a language other than English at home increased from 26% to 35%, with Spanish being the most common. In 2010, nearly one-tenth (9.5%) of all Boston residents had limited English proficiency, up from 6% in 1990.<sup>2</sup>*

*Today's immigrants are far more diverse than in earlier waves of immigration. In Boston, the top countries of origin for immigrants in 2011 were the Dominican Republic (10.1%), China (10.1%), Haiti (8.4%), Vietnam (5.0%), El Salvador (4.5%), Cape Verde islands (4.0%), Colombia (3.8%), Jamaica (3.7%), Brazil (2.8%), and Guatemala (2.6%). "Other" nationalities totaled 45%.<sup>3</sup> By 2016, Boston's ethnic and racial "minorities" had become the "majority," representing 50.5% of the city's total population. Ethnically, the three largest minority groups in Boston are African Americans (23.8%), Latinos (14.4%), and Asians (7.5%).<sup>4</sup>*

*Statewide, in 2015 nearly one in six Massachusetts residents was foreign born: the state's 1.1 million immigrants comprised 16.1% of the population. In addition, one in seven residents of the state (14.4%) was a native-born U.S. citizen with at least one immigrant parent. For the commonwealth as a whole, the top countries of origin for immigrants were China (8.8%), the Dominican Republic (7.4%), India (6%), Brazil (5.6%), and Haiti (5.1%). One in five workers in Massachusetts is an immigrant, making up a vital part of the labor force in a range of industries.*

*Similar to the older Irish, Italian, and other European immigrant groups whose labor once powered the region's industrial economy, these newer migrants have been crucial in rebuilding the population, labor force, and metropolitan landscape of the New Boston. However, Johnson argues that the fruits of the new prosperity have not been equally shared. She begins her story in the 1960s. The Immigration Act of 1965 was one of the most consequential pieces of Great Society legislation, opening the nation's doors to large-scale immigration from Africa, Asia, and Latin America.*

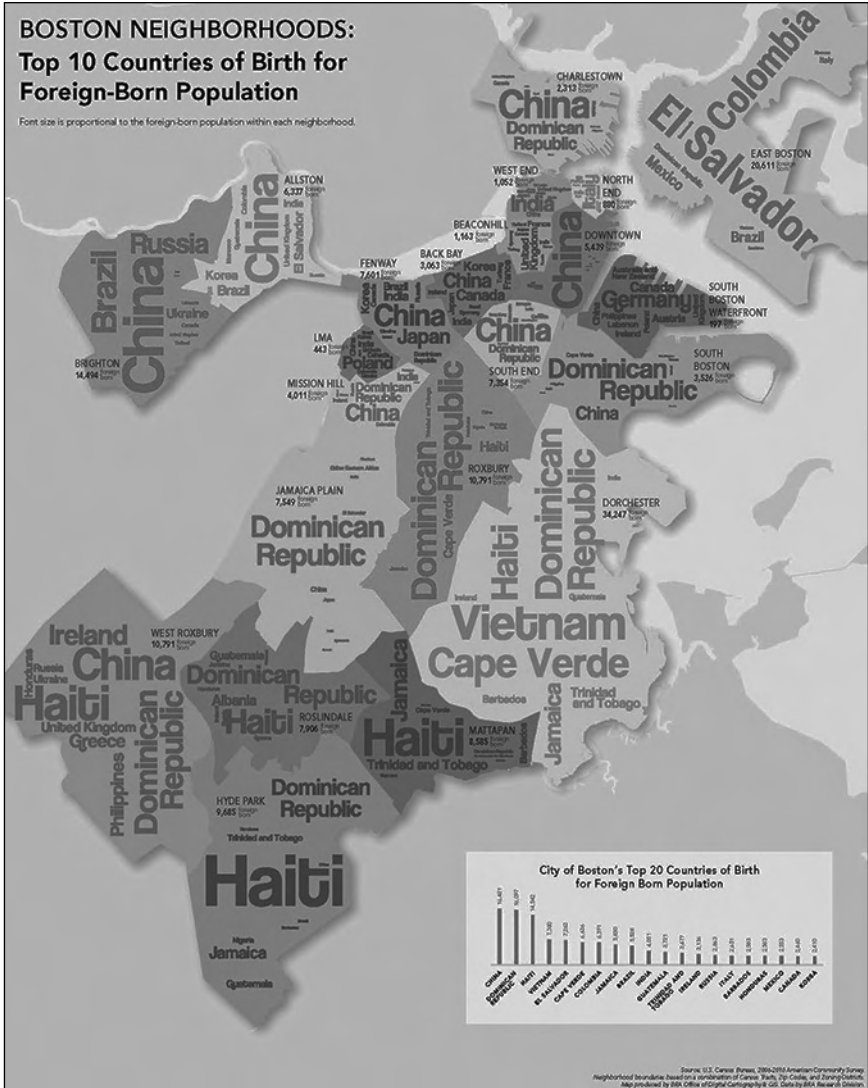
*Johnson, a professor of history at Boston College, is also a co-author of *What's New About the 'New Immigration': Traditions and Transformations in the United States Since 1965* (NY: Palgrave, 2014). Her research draws from a rich, multidisciplinary literature. She includes scholarly and journalistic work, archival research, and the oral histories of numerous individuals from various*

*ethnic groups. This comprehensive and well-written study offers an impressive depth of historical and empirical data about today's Boston and its suburbs. Topics include the city's shifting demographic patterns, the background of today's new immigrants and the "roots and routes" of their journeys to Boston, the city's economic restructuring and revitalization, the essential contributions of new immigrants to the "Massachusetts Miracle," patterns of community life, immigrant religion, political impact and incorporation, urban planning, and changing landscapes. White backlash and the limits of political power are thoughtfully explored in a chapter titled "Nativism, Violence, and the Rise of Multiculturalism."*

*The New Bostonians is vital to understanding how Boston's mid-twentieth-century decline was reversed and led to today's vibrant and flourishing city. Johnson describes the creation of a new "bimodal" economy and society. This is reflected in immigrant statistics. In terms of educational attainment, in Boston, one-third (33%) of immigrants hold a bachelor's degree or higher, compared to the overall city rate of 44%. Prior to 1990, only 22% of immigrants had a bachelor's or more advanced degree; since 1990, this percentage has increased by half. However, far fewer immigrants hold a high school diploma (or equivalent) than the city population as a whole; 28.8% of immigrants have not completed high school, compared to the citywide rate of 15.7%.<sup>5</sup>*

*Johnson documents the often overlooked but essential contributions that immigrants have made to the city's economy and the region's revitalization over the last fifty years. In terms of economic contributions, according to the City of Boston, immigrant communities spend just over \$4 billion annually from after-tax earnings. These annual expenditures generate a regional product of \$4 billion, \$1.3 billion in state and federal taxes, and over 25,800 jobs in the local economy. The 8,800 immigrant-owned small businesses in Boston generate almost \$3.7 billion in annual sales and employ 18,500 people. In addition, these businesses generate a regional product of about \$3.6 billion, contribute \$293 million in state and federal taxes, and create an additional 16,900 jobs in the local economy.<sup>6</sup> Statewide, 68,364 immigrant business owners accounted for 20% of all self-employed Massachusetts residents in 2015 and generated \$2.1 billion in business income.*

*The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s contributes to a growing number of studies that document the critical role played by new immigrant groups in reversing urban decline in cities across the nation. While most have tended to focus on larger cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Miami and San Francisco, Johnson's revealing study fills in a missing piece of this story and will be of great interest to academics and concerned citizens alike.*



### Global Boston

Courtesy of the Boston College History Department website, *Global Boston*. *Global Boston* is described as “a digital project chronicling the history of immigration to greater Boston since the 19th century. Examining different time periods and ethnic groups, the site features capsule histories, photographs, maps, documents, and oral histories documenting the history of a city where immigrants have long been a vital force in shaping economic, social and political life.” <http://globalboston.bc.edu/Map> and data courtesy of the Boston Redevelopment Authority. Source: U.S. Census, 2006-2010.

*This selection is reprinted from The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s (2015) with permission from the University of Massachusetts Press. The first pages are excerpted from the introduction, pages 1-4. The rest is excerpted from Chapter Four, "Immigrants and Work in the New Economy," pages 104-125.*

\* \* \* \* \*

## **AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION**

I first visited Boston in 1975, a summer trip following my high school graduation. It was, I later realized, a low point in the city's history. That year, Boston was riven over the turmoil of the busing crisis, a violent conflict sparked by a court-ordered desegregation plan following years of unsuccessful efforts to integrate the public schools. Several times that fall, scenes of racial mayhem in Boston topped the evening news, giving the city an ugly reputation that would endure for decades.

The city's tense racial standoff was just one indication of its deepening malaise. Like many older cities of the Northeast, Boston had been steadily losing industry, jobs, and residents since the 1950s. Over the past two decades, the city's population had plummeted, from 801,444 in 1950 to 641,071 in 1970—a 20% drop. By the 1970s, the city bore the telltale signs of this decline: a shrinking tax base, run-down housing, deteriorating schools, vacant storefronts, and neighborhoods scarred by urban renewal. As the crime rate surged upward and racial tensions grew, many middle and working-class whites fled to the suburbs. But not all suburbs were immune from the downturn; older inner-ring communities such as Chelsea, Revere, and Lynn faced similar problems and losses.

By the time I moved to the area, twenty years later, Boston was a very different city. In the intervening years, changes in the global economy had largely succeeded in bringing about the "New Boston" that planners had long envisioned. Experiencing an astonishing turnaround beginning in the 1980s, the city's ailing economy bounced back as its high-tech, medical, and scientific sectors blossomed. Although great inequities remained, new investment and a growing job market had helped to stop the hemorrhaging of population, and a new vitality had appeared downtown and in several Boston neighborhoods. Nearby Cambridge followed suit, as did a number of suburbs that soon shared in the revival.

Boston's renaissance has by now become a familiar story. Similar transformations characterized life in New York, San Francisco, and other U.S. cities rejuvenated by the postindustrial economy. Although often told as a story of corporate restructuring, technological innovation, and elite-led gentrification, Boston's metropolitan transformation required a far broader cast of characters. Indeed, just as the larger global economy drove the market for computers, software, and medical devices, new immigrant residents drawn from a global market of workers and entrepreneurs were helping to bring about these changes.

Amid the tense black-and-white-defined society of the 1970s, though, few had been aware of the latest newcomers in their midst, or the vital role they would play in the city's future. This book turns the spotlight on those new Bostonians - immigrants who have arrived since the 1960s. Prior to that, the immigrant share of the U.S. population had been declining for more than forty years, the result of restrictive immigration policies dating back to the 1920s. In the city of Boston, the foreign-born share of the population had fallen to just 13% by 1970. But the passage of the Immigration Act of 1965 once again reformed the nation's immigration system, accelerating a new migrant stream that would boost Boston's foreign-born population to 27% by 2010. Such numbers approach the record levels set a century earlier, when the foreign-born made up more than a third of Boston's population. Like the old immigrants, whose labor powered the region's industrial economy, Boston's newer migrants have been crucial in re-building the population, labor force, and metropolitan landscape of the New Boston.<sup>7</sup>

Although we know much about the Irish and other earlier immigrants to the region, historians have largely ignored these new Bostonians. A quick survey of the library catalog reveals numerous works on the city's old immigrants, beginning with Oscar Handlin's pioneering 1941 classic *Boston's Immigrants*, chronicling the saga of the Hub's Irish newcomers.<sup>8</sup> While in many ways the new Bostonians resemble the European immigrants that Handlin first described, the recent arrivals have been far more diverse, with origins mainly in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean. They have gravitated to similar workplaces and neighborhoods as the earlier migrants but also to jobs that simply did not exist fifty years ago and to communities that rarely in the past housed immigrants. Moreover, the new migration has occurred amid a fast-paced global economy that has produced strikingly different social, cultural, and political arrangements, some of which have fostered new inequalities in a city that has become increasingly unaffordable.

*The New Bostonians* explores the old and new immigrant terrain of the metro area to understand just how much the newcomers have in common

with their predecessors and how the process of immigrant incorporation has changed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Boston is an excellent vantage point for studying these issues. To date, most scholarly work on post-1965 immigrants has focused on the three largest gateways - New York, Los Angeles, and Miami. More recently, however, scholars have begun to look at the impact of new immigrants on areas that were not historical immigration centers, such as the Sunbelt cities of Dallas and Atlanta. But much remains to be done. As immigrants have settled throughout the country since the 1980s, they have transformed some of the older gateway cities of the Northeast and Midwest, bringing new life to declining industrial neighborhoods and mill towns.

The Boston area, with its history of industrial decline and rapid rebirth as a center of the new knowledge economy, is an ideal place to examine this post-industrial transformation and the newcomers' role in it. Boston's long-standing history as an immigrant gateway also offers a good case study of how new and old ethnic groups have encountered one another. As immigrant groups have struggled to adapt to a restructured economy and a changing urban landscape, these encounters have been marked at times by great compassion and understanding, but on other occasions by bitter resentment and violent resistance.

Although this latest wave of immigration is now more than fifty years old, historians have barely begun to develop a historical perspective on it. Since the 1960s, the changing dynamics of migration, settlement, and labor - as well as the evolution of new immigrant religious and political institutions - have transformed immigrant experiences, along with the greater Boston region itself. Analyzing this history helps us put the new immigration into a broader historical frame. The region's newcomers do share a good deal with the Irish, Italian, Jewish, and other immigrants who arrived a century earlier. But there have also been critical differences, most of which stemmed from the sweeping changes in the global economy, the shifting role of the state in American life, and the emergence of new cultural beliefs and political practices in the wake of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Such changes have brought people together in new and unexpected ways - in neighborhoods, workplaces, churches, and political groups. In its post-industrial rebirth, greater Boston provides an excellent setting for seeing these new relationships at ground level.

While certain migrant groups in Massachusetts have attracted considerable scholarly attention, there is no general history of Boston's new immigrants, and there are very few city or metropolitan-level studies of the new immigration. This book builds on the important work done by social

scientists who have studied immigrants in the Boston region, but it also takes a more explicitly historical approach, not just comparing old and new immigrants but also describing the evolution of the new immigration as it has unfolded since the 1960s. Moreover, *The New Bostonians* is also a work of urban history that looks at how new immigrants and their children have shaped metropolitan development, religion, and politics—subjects that are essential for understanding how newcomers have been incorporated into a historically Irish-Catholic city. . . . [Editor's Note: The following sections are from chapter four of Marilynn Johnson's book, *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s*.]

### IMMIGRANTS AND WORK IN THE NEW ECONOMY

Originally built in the 1840s, the Assabet Mill in Maynard, Massachusetts, began as a carpet factory powered by the Assabet River. Located some twenty miles west of Boston, the Assabet Mill became the world's largest woolen mill in the early twentieth century, employing thousands of textile workers. Mostly immigrants from Ireland, Finland, Poland, Russia, and Italy, many of them attempted to organize, founding a local of the CIO Textile Workers Union in the late 1930s. After a fitful thirty-year decline, the American Woolen Company shut down the Assabet Mill permanently in 1950, laying off its 1,200 workers. Seven years later, the new computer maker Digital Equipment Corporation took up residence in one of the renovated buildings and later purchased the entire mill complex, leasing it to more than thirty mostly high-tech companies.<sup>9</sup>

Like other recycled factories in Boston, Cambridge, and Waltham, the Assabet Mill is a living testament to the global economic forces that affected greater Boston in the late twentieth century. As the region shifted away from manufacturing and toward knowledge-based industries, its infrastructure and workforce changed along with it. Immigrants have played a key role in this transformation, providing labor for both the lower and upper rungs of the new service-based economy. Indeed, most of the growth in the state's and metro region's labor force between 1980 and 2010 occurred as a result of the immigrant influx. But the economic transformation of the past fifty years has not been as smooth as the story of the Assabet Mill might suggest. Immigrants arrived in the midst of wrenching economic changes, uneven development, and often exploitative practices as the older industries gave way to the new. Since the 1980s, moreover, a new bimodal pattern of labor has emerged, one that has presented both problems and opportunities for the foreign-born. These developments, along with new issues around

### Boston's Foreign-Born Population, 2011

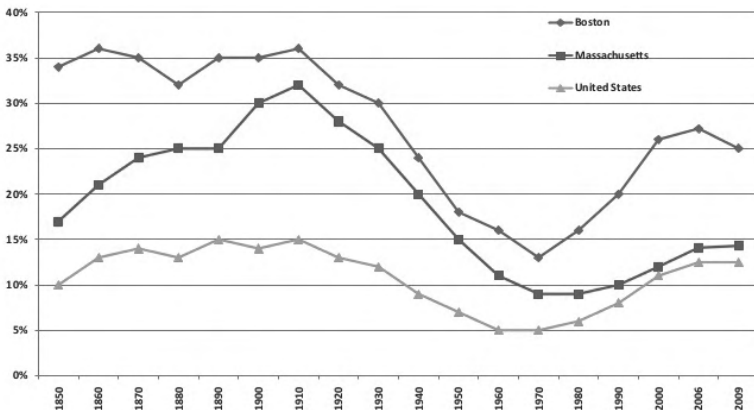
OTHER	74,569	45.1%
Dominican Republic	16,721	10.1%
China	16,668	10.1%
Haiti	13,825	8.4%
Vietnam	8,344	5.0%
El Salvador	7,421	4.5%
Cape Verde	6,566	4.0%
Colombia	6,315	3.8%
Jamaica	6,114	3.7%
Brazil	4,622	2.8%
Guatemala	4,229	2.6%

**TOTAL 165,394**

Source: Boston Redevelopment Authority, Research Division, "New Bostonians, 2013-14," March 2014.

### Historically, Boston has had a greater proportion of foreign-born residents than the Commonwealth and the country...

Foreign-born Population 1850 – 2009 (% of total population)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, BRA Research Division Analysis

documentation and deportation, have led to a distinctly different economic scenario than that faced by earlier European immigrants. Although newcomers have undoubtedly helped to rebuild and revitalize the economy of greater Boston since the 1980s, the prosperity created by the new economy has not been equally shared.

## **ECONOMIC RESTRUCTURING: FROM MILL-BASED TO MIND-BASED**

The transformation of Massachusetts's industrial economy had been under way for much of the twentieth century. Prior to World War I, the state was among the most highly industrialized in the nation, with hundreds of textile and shoe mills employing the bulk of its workers. But other industries were also important: Cambridge was the candy-making capital of New England; rubber goods were king in places like Watertown, Chelsea, and Woburn; Lynn and Salem churned out electrical products; and cities and towns throughout greater Boston produced chemicals, foods, paper goods, soap, machinery, and other products. In the 1920s, however, the textile and shoe industries began shifting their operations to the South in search of cheaper, nonunionized labor, while the Great Depression resulted in scores of local factory closures. Although many New England industries revived with government contracts during World War II, the downward spiral continued in the postwar period as many companies relocated to the suburbs, to the South, or abroad. Along with the loss of jobs and industry, the population of Boston declined by a staggering 30%, from a high of 801,444 in 1950 to 562,994 in 1980.

By the 1980s, however, the foundations of the region's new knowledge-based economy were already in place. During the postwar era, Boston's universities, medical centers, and defense-related industries benefited from massive federal funding for education, healthcare, scientific research, and military contracting. Moreover, a burgeoning electronics industry led by MIT-trained engineers gave rise to a spate of new computer and high-tech firms that would enjoy record profits in the mid-1980s (the so-called Massachusetts Miracle) and the dot-com boom of the late 1990s. Financing for these industries came from earlier fortunes earned in textiles and shoes that were rechanneled as venture capital, making the financial industry a major player in the new economy as well. Boston's highly regarded medical schools, laboratories, and teaching hospitals also became centers for research that yielded new ventures in pharmaceuticals, medical instruments, and, later, biotechnology.<sup>10</sup>

Immigrant workers have been essential to this new service-based economy, from sweeping the floors to starting the companies. Although mill-based industries in Massachusetts experienced a steady decline in the late twentieth century, they were still an important part of the area's economy during the early years of the new immigration. In fact, in the 1960s and 1970s, local manufacturers recruited Asian and Latino migrants as low-paid, nonunionized labor that helped sustain declining industries such as textiles, shoes, and garments. In the process, these new workers established beachheads of settlement in older urban neighborhoods and industrial communities that would continue to grow even after those jobs disappeared. In the short term, their labor power helped local employers "ride the decline" and extend the life of struggling manufacturing operations facing national and global competition.<sup>11</sup>

Puerto Ricans and other early Latino migrants occupied this role in many of the state's waning industries. In the 1960s, some of the remaining textile mills began recruiting Puerto Rican workers who labored seasonally in local agriculture or had been laid off from textile plants that had closed in other parts of the Northeast. Local employers also recruited skilled textile workers from Colombia who could repair old-style, Massachusetts made looms that had been exported to Latin America as New England mills closed down. Shoe manufacturers in Lynn and clothing manufacturers in Boston also recruited Puerto Rican and Dominican workers in the 1960s, relying on chain migration among their Latino employees and sometimes offering referral fees to those who could bring in new workers. Dona Suncha, a Puerto Rican woman from Orocovis who was one of the first Latinos to settle in Waltham in the late 1950s, explained how her family aided this migration: "My husband's cousin who worked on a tomato farm in Lexington got a job for my husband in the same place. . . . Later my husband, searching for something better, began working in a metal factory." Soon she was hosting dozens of young friends and neighbors arriving from Orocovis in search of work in Waltham factories. Jaime Cardenas and his family played a similar role for Dominicans settling in Jamaica Plain around the same time, providing temporary housing and helping them find jobs at a local shoe factory.<sup>12</sup>

In Boston, Chinese women played an integral role in the declining garment industry. Jewish and Italian women had dominated this work in the early twentieth century, with many of them joining the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union in the 1930s. In the 1960s, Puerto Rican and Chinese women were recruited by a burgeoning network of sweatshops in Chinatown and East Boston seeking low-cost labor to compete with the

emerging garment centers in Asia. With the expansion of Chinese immigration after 1965, new migrants from Guangdong streamed into Chinatown factories. Most found their jobs through personal contacts and referrals from friends, neighbors, and churches. English was not required; many shops were run by Cantonese-speaking supervisors who - like earlier Jewish and Italian employers - sometimes allowed women to bring their children to work, return home to cook meals, or take work home in the evening (though that latter practice was illegal). Most of the jobs were low paying; working conditions were poor, and many of the shops were nonunionized. But for those who did secure jobs at union shops, the ILGWU provided health insurance for members and their families (a valuable benefit, since many of their husbands worked in nonunionized Chinatown restaurants). Such benefits, as well as the chance to work close to home among a community of co-ethnic women, were appealing to many new immigrants. By 1978, more than 70% of the city's Chinese women workers were employed in the apparel industry.<sup>13</sup>

By this time, however, the industry was already in decline. Between 1970 and 1985, the number of Boston firms dropped from 383 to 146, reducing the workforce from roughly eleven thousand to five thousand. By the late 1980s, hundreds of Chinese women were unemployed and trying to retrain for other occupations. Hing Seto, a Chinese immigrant who worked as a stitcher for the P & L Sportswear Company, described how difficult it was for her and other immigrant women who were laid off in 1985: "We knew how to work, but we didn't know how to speak [English]," Seto explained. "Many, many factories were closing. There was nowhere to go. I felt like nothing because I couldn't find a job." With the help of the Chinese Progressive Association, hundreds of laid-off Asian garment workers rallied at the statehouse in the spring of 1986, calling for access to retraining programs, English classes, and unemployment benefits. In this case the legislature responded, setting up programs that allowed Seto and her coworkers to train for new jobs in the transitioning economy.

A study of laid-off Chinese garment workers in Boston in the early 1990s found that the majority shifted to service occupations. Expanding service industries, such as the new Tufts New England Medical Center, had contributed to raising Chinatown's real estate prices, which helped drive many small garment shops out of business. Many of the former garment workers later found work as housekeepers and food service workers in the new hotel complex at Copley Square. Others secured jobs in childcare, domestic service, and assembly work in electronics and pharmaceutical plants. A small number, like Seto, got computer training and moved into clerical work.<sup>14</sup> In this way there occurred a wholesale shift of immigrant workers from the

city's declining manufacturing industries to the bottom rungs of the rising service and high-tech/medical sector of the 1980s.

The share of immigrant workers engaged as operatives and laborers fell precipitously during the 1980s, from 23 to 14%, while those employed in the services increased their share from 23 to 31%. Latino workers in the region tended to stay concentrated in manufacturing jobs longer than any other group, possibly because of lower levels of education and English proficiency and lack of access to other industries. Unlike Chinese and Southeast Asian migrants, though, Latinos did not find much work in the assembly plants of the 1980s tech boom.

Indeed, some computer and electronics employers actively sought out Asian assembly workers, for whom they provided job training, transportation, and English classes. Such employers took advantage of job placement programs for refugees and may have had preferences for groups they saw as hardworking, model minorities. The fact that professional Asian immigrants and their children occupied prominent positions in some of these companies (or even owned them) may also have influenced recruitment. In any case, the exclusion of Latino workers from the wage benefits of the Massachusetts Miracle and their concentration in the most unstable and declining industries led to some of the highest rates of Latino poverty in the country in the 1980s. Although they would continue to dominate the region's ailing manufacturing sector into the twenty-first century, Latinos also joined the shift to low-skilled service work during the 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

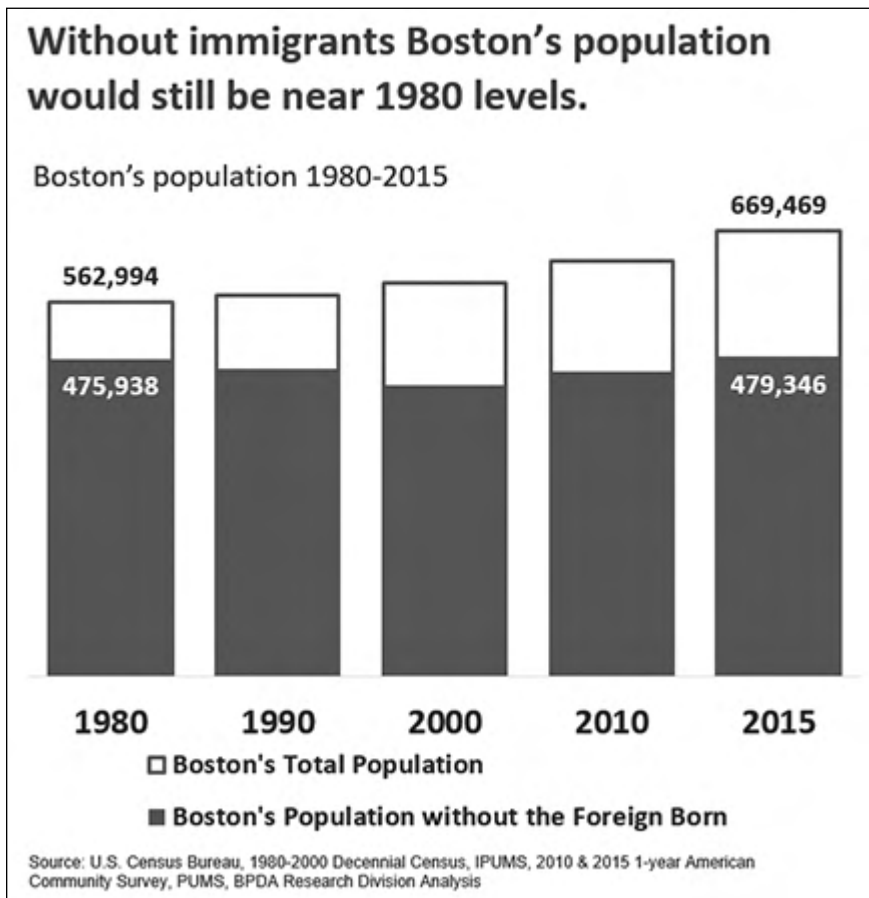
A closer look at the labor force in Boston between 1980 and 2010 shows just how important immigrants have been to the growth of the city's economy, particularly in the rising service sector. The city's labor force grew from 275,571 in 1980 to 362,846 in 2010, increasing by roughly a third over this thirty-year period. Immigrant workers have made up a growing proportion of this workforce, from 14% in 1980 to 32% in 2010.

In fact, over this thirty-year period, immigrants made up 89% of the overall growth in the city's labor force, while native-born workers accounted for only 11%. Moreover, a significant percentage of the new native-born workers have been young, second-generation ethnics who began to enter the labor force as they reached adulthood. Indeed, without immigrants and their children, the city's labor force would have grown little if at all over those decades. And Boston's experience is indicative of a broader trend across much of the Northeast; a growing dependence on immigrant labor has in fact characterized the workforce across Massachusetts as well as in New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island.<sup>16</sup> In Boston and other northeastern cities, the infusion of new immigrant workers has been

increasingly concentrated in the service industries—both in skilled professional and managerial occupations and in the lower-skilled and lower-paid service jobs that have proliferated since the 1980s.

As in many U.S. cities, jobs in cleaning, groundskeeping, food service, childcare, elder care, and other services became the lifeblood of many of the area’s less-skilled foreign workers. Their labor was critical to the emerging knowledge economy and to maintaining the lifestyles of the affluent and often stressed two-income families employed in the upper ranks of this new economy.

But service jobs were not only the result of economic restructuring; they were also created in response to new career opportunities for middle-class women. Between 1970 and 2010, the number of Boston women employed in professional and managerial ranks increased from 42% to 54% of the city’s



workforce. As Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Hochschild observe, such new employment gave rise to “a growing ‘care industry’ [that] has stepped into the traditional wife’s role, creating a very real demand for migrant women.” Likewise, high-pressure careers for middle-class men left less time for tending the yard, making home repairs, or sharing domestic work and childrearing. In a state with an aging native-born population, longer life expectancies led to an expansion of hospitals, nursing homes, and assisted living facilities, which in turn required a vast army of orderlies, nursing aides, and other caregivers. The arrival of growing numbers of immigrants coincided with these changes in the social landscape, while growing global inequalities limited wage-earning opportunities for migrants in their home countries. While Boston-area service jobs provided much-needed employment for newcomers, low pay, poor working conditions, and inadequate benefits often left them struggling to survive, much like earlier immigrants who labored in the region’s kitchens and mills prior to unionization.<sup>17</sup>

New immigrants also resembled the old in their tendency to move into certain industries and employment niches. Although a wide assortment of ethnic groups found jobs in fields such as construction and food services, certain groups have clustered in particular jobs or industries. Latinos, for example—particularly women from Central America and the Dominican Republic—increasingly found work as office cleaners. Their entry occurred in the 1980s and 1990s as building services shifted to nonunionized labor, replacing older white and black male janitors who had earned union-scale wages and health benefits. The move to nonunionized immigrant labor accompanied the real estate boom of the 1980s and the rise of building service contractors like Unnico, which cut labor costs by hiring part-time workers and not providing health benefits. Latino men were hired first, but increasing numbers of Latinas were then recruited through family and ethnic networks. By 2002 Latinos made up roughly 70% of the city’s janitors. Cape Verdeans and Brazilians also developed niches in janitorial work, though many of the latter subsequently shifted into residential house cleaning.<sup>18</sup>

Among Haitian (and later African) men, cab driving became a common occupation. Dominated by immigrants since the early twentieth century, taxi driving once offered a mobile, relatively independent work setting (often with healthcare and other benefits) and the possibility of owning a small business for those who could purchase taxi medallions and vehicles. Haitians who entered the industry in the 1960s and 1970s later bought medallions and began leasing their cabs to fellow Haitians, creating a niche in the industry. As in building services, though, the influx of immigrant workers coincided with the rise of large-scale subcontracting in which taxi corporations bought

up hundreds of high-priced medallions and leased their cabs to drivers who were reclassified as independent contractors. Cabbies typically worked twelve or twenty-four-hour shifts, putting in a minimum of seventy-two hours per week with no overtime or health benefits. They also had to pay for gas, taxes, tolls, and hefty leasing fees, and in some cases, daily bribes to taxi company dispatchers. During the 2008 recession, Haitian driver Chando Souffant told of working sixteen-hour shifts, seven days a week: "That's the only way you can survive," he explained. "They call us ambassadors of the city, but they treat us like slaves." During big conventions and other busy times, cabbies could make a living, but during recessions, dozens of drivers were left homeless and forced to sleep in their cars. Critics of the city's taxi system called it "sharecropping on wheels."<sup>19</sup>

While Haitian men were driving taxis, Haitian women flocked in large numbers into nursing jobs. The region's burgeoning healthcare complex and the opening of new nursing and assisted living centers created a swift demand for certified nursing assistants. Haitian women gravitated to these jobs, positions that required only eighty hours of classroom training. In 2003, roughly half of all Haitian women workers in the Boston area were employed in this field, and an astounding 80% of the region's nursing aides were of Haitian descent. Although many complained of oppressive workloads and racial bias, the niche grew because of the steady work available and pay rates that were above minimum wage. Some nursing aides were able to continue their schooling and earn certifications as licensed practical nurses or registered nurses, higher-paid occupations for which there was even stronger demand. But like the janitors and cab drivers, a growing number of nursing aides were hired through contracting firms that offered part-time work with few benefits or opportunities for advancement.<sup>20</sup>

Haitians and other immigrant groups that began arriving several decades ago developed expansive employment niches over time, but even newer and smaller groups have developed distinct occupational clusters. Many Ethiopians, for example, found work as parking garage attendants in Boston and other US cities beginning in the 1980s, when the first wave of refugees arrived. Using ethnic connections to secure jobs and developing a good reputation with employers, some Ethiopians used these low-wage jobs as stepping stones to managerial positions in the parking companies. Younger Ethiopians, by contrast, sought out quieter evening shifts that allowed them to combine work and studies while attending college during the day. Dejene Ahmed, a refugee who arrived from Ethiopia in the 1980s, found an evening job at a downtown garage that helped subsidize his education at Wentworth Institute. He went on to a position at a local high-tech firm and,

with his wife (who also worked in a parking garage while attending college), bought a home in suburban Randolph. For refugees like Ahmed, who had a foundation of education in their homeland and some initial resettlement assistance from the government, such informal “work-study” jobs helped support their college education and upward mobility.<sup>21</sup>

Since the mid-1980s, certain sectors of the economy have also become niches for unauthorized immigrants. Prior to that time, lax enforcement measures meant that undocumented workers could move more freely throughout the workforce. But in the wake of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act—which required employers to verify their workers’ legal status—federal enforcement efforts were stepped up, making some employers leery of hiring the undocumented. Nevertheless, many companies and individuals—particularly smaller-scale and cash-based businesses such as restaurants, residential construction, landscaping, and domestic work—continued to hire these workers. As a booming trade in false Social Security cards emerged in the 1990s, even some large manufacturers and construction firms did not hesitate to hire the undocumented. The proliferation of temporary labor agencies and contracting firms also helped to insulate employers from prosecution by shifting the compliance responsibility to the contractors. Such operations, which provided transportation from poorer Latino and Southeast Asian communities to job sites throughout the metro area, often skimmed off as much as 40 to 50% of workers’ wages. As one Colombian community activist explained, “The temporary employment agencies that pick [Latino workers] up on a corner and bring them every day to a different place to work, pay them minimum wage and then take out a fee for shoes, food, etc. So the person ends up with almost nothing in their pay check.” Labor activists charged that these contractors fostered a “shadow labor force” that was ill-paid and ill-treated.<sup>22</sup>

Such attempts to secure cheap immigrant labor were hardly new. Contractors who built the railroads recruited Irish laborers from Boston in the nineteenth century, while in the early 1900s Italian padrones combed the docks in East Boston for newcomers to work in lumber mills and construction sites across New England. In recent years, however, the use of contingent immigrant labor has become a tool for de-unionizing the workforce and a means of circumventing federal and state labor regulations. The issue of documentation has also created a potentially more coercive and exploitative work climate. Periodic immigration raids - such as the arrest of 83 workers at Suffolk Downs racetrack in 1988 and 360 workers at the Michael Bianco leather factory in New Bedford in 2007 - showed how employers blatantly disregarded federal immigration law.<sup>23</sup>

These raids and hundreds of smaller ones instilled fear in undocumented workers that made them vulnerable to exploitation. Labor advocates noted that some employers threatened to call immigration authorities if workers complained about pay or working conditions, or expressed interest in joining a union. Reports of unsafe conditions, withheld wages, or failure to pay overtime were widespread. Women workers also faced routine sexual harassment and even rape by employers or supervisors. Ann Philbin, director of an immigrant workers' center in Boston in 1992, noted that sexual harassment was "a constant in nearly every immigrant woman we see." Beginning in the 1990s, a few Salvadoran women broke the silence and filed claims against their employers, but most quietly endured for fear of being fired or deported.<sup>24</sup> As we will see in later chapters, such abuse gave rise to workers' centers and other labor and community groups that would become an important front in the emerging immigrant rights movement.

## **ETHNIC ENTREPRENEURS**

For both documented and undocumented immigrants, one way to minimize exposure to workplace abuse was through self-employment. For the undocumented, starting a small cash-based business could reduce problems of documentation and the likelihood of detection; for documented immigrants, entrepreneurship enabled them to work for themselves and avoid exploitation by employers or labor contractors. Like Jewish, Italian, Greek, and other earlier immigrants who had founded corner groceries, dry goods stores, and restaurants, recent immigrants have launched thousands of small businesses, including more than 8,800 in the city of Boston alone in 2007. While not all migrant groups have been as able or inclined to take up self-employment, migrants from Brazil, China, and Vietnam, among others, have had a significant impact on economic life in the region. Their efforts have driven a resurgence in entrepreneurship that has characterized greater Boston and other metropolitan areas since the 1980s.<sup>25</sup>

A large portion of the growth in small business has been among Asians and Asian Americans, among whom the number of small businesses grew by 158% between 1992 and 2002. Among the Chinese, restaurants have been the foundation of the ethnic economy since the early twentieth century, when Chinatown eateries sprang up to serve inexpensive meals to male sojourners and later offered more Americanized fare to Chinatown diners and tourists. Since the 1960s, however, growing American demand for more authentic Asian cuisine and the arrival of new immigrants from Hong Kong, Thailand, and Vietnam have resulted in an explosion of new restaurants throughout the

metro area. As more restaurants opened in the suburbs, a growing fleet of vans converged on Chinatown each day to ferry immigrant workers to kitchens in Brockton, Tewksbury, Saugus, and even southern New Hampshire. Offering only low wages, long hours, and few benefits, these restaurants employed thousands of less skilled immigrants who struggled to make ends meet, but they also enriched a smaller number of owners and chefs who managed to succeed in a highly competitive industry.<sup>26</sup>

Other Asian groups also opened ethnic restaurants and niche businesses. Vietnamese, for example, opened restaurants serving pho (a hearty noodle soup) and other Southeast Asian specialties, as well as establishing a growing number of nail salons and floor sanding businesses. By the early 2000s, the Vietnamese owned roughly half of all nail salons in Boston, where owners leased chairs to co-ethnic “independent contractors” who had completed certification courses for around \$750. As in the restaurant business, the oversaturation of the nail industry led to cutthroat pricing and falling wages for workers, but owners whose businesses survived made a reasonable living. Among Koreans, dry cleaning businesses became the most common form of entrepreneurship. By the late 1990s there were more than 250 Korean-owned dry cleaning establishments in New England, a large percentage of them in the greater Boston area.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the most dynamic ethnic entrepreneurship occurred among Brazilian immigrants, who developed substantial niches in construction, landscaping, and house cleaning in the 1990s. In fact, 15% of Brazilian immigrants in metro Boston were self-employed in 2000, a rate nearly four times that of the total foreign-born population. This impressive showing was based on Brazilians’ relatively high levels of education and financial capital and a strong and valued culture of entrepreneurship in their home country. Many migrants, especially those who arrived in the 1980s and 1990s, had graduated from high school or college in Brazil and had work experience in sales, teaching, banking, and other middle-class occupations. Before learning English, many took low-paying jobs in Boston area manufacturing or service industries.<sup>28</sup>

Some, like Maria da Graca de Sales, a former school teacher from Governador Valadares who found work as a housekeeper for a Boston hotel in the mid-1980s, saw that she could earn more by starting her own cleaning business. “Hotels paid \$5 an hour, but people who wanted homes cleaned were paying \$8,” explained de Sales’ daughter, Rosangela. Targeting prosperous suburbs with busy two-earner households, house cleaners charged competitive rates and built up routes of twenty or more homes per week. By 2006, de Sales had acquired seventy clients that brought in more

than \$100,000 per year. Successful businesses like hers hired more workers (typically new arrivals), spun off new routes to family members, or sold client referrals to other immigrants via the Brazilian American press. Through such practices, the niche expanded and house cleaning became the single largest occupation among Boston area Brazilians.<sup>29</sup>

The success of Brazilian house cleaning, though, prompted criticism in some quarters. As in the nail salons and taxi business, house cleaners often hired co-ethnic helpers as “independent contractors,” who were paid in cash, had no taxes withheld, and received no benefits. Like the nail business, house cleaning involved steady contact with dangerous chemicals that led to respiratory and skin problems. Moreover, some cleaners who had small family operations relied on their teenage children to work long hours that interfered with their education and, in some cases, led them to drop out of school entirely. And, like a number of other immigrant businesses, house cleaning employed a large number of unauthorized migrants who could be paid in cash and remain relatively invisible to immigration authorities. This left the undocumented employees vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, as family and ethnic ties did not always guarantee humane treatment. For those who became owners, however, a successful cleaning business helped them support family back in Brazil, buy homes, educate their children, and enjoy a degree of social mobility.<sup>30</sup>

Brazilian cleaning companies and other small businesses also provided capital for development efforts, both in Brazil and in Massachusetts. Cleaners interviewed by journalists and scholars described how they used cleaning profits to build houses and businesses in Minas Gerais or to buy and renovate properties in Massachusetts. The Quintelas family--six brothers who founded a house cleaning business in the 1990s--later used their earnings to buy and renovate three rundown duplexes in downtown Framingham. Other Brazilian entrepreneurs opened stores in old, boarded-up storefronts in the same area, sparking the downtown revival described in chapter 3. A similar process took place in Everett in the early 2000s as Brazilian immigrants bought and fixed up old downtown storefronts.<sup>31</sup>

Brazilians were not the only group leading such neighborhood revivals. In fact, immigrant-led urban revitalization in the region dates back to the 1970s, when large numbers of Cuban, Dominican, and Vietnamese immigrants began settling in old working-class neighborhoods. The first area to experience a turnaround was Hyde Square in Jamaica Plain, where Cuban and Dominican merchants began renovating older buildings for new businesses to serve the neighborhood’s growing Latino population. Meeting weekly at Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church, the merchants devised plans

for attracting new businesses and reducing crime and vandalism. Their efforts succeeded, and Centre Street developed into the city's largest Latino commercial district by the 1980s. A decade later, in East Boston, Colombian and Salvadoran businesses helped revitalize old shopping districts in Maverick and Central squares, while Vietnamese restaurants and retail businesses injected new life into a declining Fields Corner neighborhood.<sup>32</sup>

But perhaps the most remarkable example of revitalization occurred adjacent to Chinatown. There, Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese refugees opened restaurants, video stores, and gift shops in the city's notorious adult entertainment district, known as the Combat Zone. With little available credit and few contacts in the older Chinatown community, aspiring Southeast Asian entrepreneurs were relegated to storefronts on Washington Street, a seedy district of adult bookstores, strip clubs, and a thriving prostitution trade. Many of the newcomers had been merchants in Vietnam, and some spoke both Cantonese and Vietnamese. By the late 1990s, an estimated 30% of all Chinatown businesses were owned by Vietnamese immigrants who, along with the ethnic Chinese, were credited with reclaiming Washington Street and helping drive the Combat Zone out of business. Entrepreneurial success, however, proved to be a double-edged sword. As revitalization took hold in both Chinatown and Jamaica Plain, gentrification increased rents and property values, driving away co-ethnic customers and some of the small ethnic businesses they patronized.<sup>33</sup>

## THE KNOWLEDGE SECTOR

One of the most distinctive characteristics of the new immigration has been the large percentage of highly skilled newcomers with technical and professional expertise. Because of its wealth of educational institutions and knowledge-based industries, greater Boston has attracted more than its share of such new immigrants, who have increased their share of the city's foreign-born workforce from 18% in 1980 to 27% in 2010. By the twenty-first century, more than a third of recent immigrants to Massachusetts held a bachelor's or advanced degree, and roughly a quarter of the state's newcomers were admitted under skill preferences--compared with only 13% nationwide.<sup>34</sup>

The rising skill levels of the immigrant population began after World War II, when the United States granted refugee status to foreign-born scientists and intellectuals from communist-bloc countries—primarily from China and eastern Europe. Harvard, MIT, and other Boston area universities were attractive destinations for these talented newcomers, including computer



"To Immigrants With Love" (East Boston Mural, 2017)

**Left:** This mural pays tribute to the generations of immigrants who have not only made Boston their home, but have helped it to develop into the thriving city it is today. It was sponsored by the Boston Mayor's Office for Immigrant Advancement. At its unveiling, Mayor Martin J. Walsh proclaimed: "Boston is a city that embraces its rich immigrant history and the immigrant residents who continue to contribute to our neighborhoods." He added that "East Boston is a neighborhood that has served as a gateway for immigrants who have come to our city from across the globe. This mural celebrates two of the many people who have added to the immigrant legacy in this neighborhood and Boston as a whole." It was painted by the "Mayor's Mural Crew," a youth employment program that has transformed overlooked areas in the city into vibrant cultural landmarks since 1990. Led by artist Heidi Schork, the Mural Crew serves as a way for youth to engage with their community and develop professional skills.



**Copley Square (January 29, 2017)**

In 2017 thousands of Boston residents participated in protests against President Trump's proposed immigration and refugee ban. Source: New England Cable News

and electronics developer An Wang (Chinese) and foreign policy specialist Zbigniew Brzezinski (Polish). During the Cold War, the Fulbright program and other international educational exchanges attracted growing numbers of foreign students to Boston area universities. Originating in Europe, but also from newly-independent states in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean, these visitors helped initiate new streams of foreign students to local universities, some of whom would find work and stay permanently. Other professional and technical workers were admitted under the skill preferences of the 1952 and 1965 immigration acts.

Since the 1960s, the region's universities, hospitals, and high-tech industries have recruited many of these skilled workers. Federal funding spurred growth in all of these areas in the postwar era, creating new labor demands and preferences. The GI Bill and other postwar student aid programs helped expand enrollments and faculties at area universities, while brisk competition between the schools prompted them to look abroad for top professors and researchers. The establishment of Medicare and Medicaid in 1965 dramatically expanded demand for healthcare services, although American medical and nursing schools could not keep pace. To fill the gap, especially in the lower-paying urban public hospitals, foreign-trained medical students and nurses were recruited from countries such as the Philippines, Canada, Ireland, and India. Later, the growth of private health insurance plans, the rapid aging of the state's population, and the passage of a mandatory public health insurance program in Massachusetts in 2006 and the federal Affordable Care Act in 2010 have continued to fuel demand. The nursing shortage has been particularly acute; to facilitate the recruitment of foreign nurses, Congress passed bills in 1989 and 2006 providing qualified applicants with temporary work visas and easier access to green cards. Overall, the foreign-born have filled much of the demand for new medical personnel in Massachusetts: by 2005, they made up more than half of all medical scientists, 40% of pharmacists, 28% of physicians and surgeons, and 10% of registered nurses.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, skilled immigrant workers have played a critical role in the region's high-tech electronics, computing, and information technology sectors. Like medicine and education, these industries benefited from federal funding during and after World War II as the government sought to develop sophisticated new communications, weapons, and data systems. During the 1970s and 1980s, tech firms recruited foreign-born (mostly Asian) engineering and computer science students from MIT and other universities, as well as hired Soviet refugees with technical backgrounds. Still hungry for new talent and innovation, technology firms lobbied Congress to create a new

category of H-1B visas under the 1990 Immigration Act. The H-1B program subsequently admitted tens of thousands of new computer programmers, engineers, physicians, and other highly-skilled workers on a temporary basis. Local computer technology firms used the program to recruit a large crop of Indian workers in the 1990s and 2000s. Some of these workers returned home after a year or two; others stayed and became permanent legal residents when employers sponsored their green cards.<sup>36</sup>

The government's newfound role in facilitating the migration of skilled foreign workers has been the target of criticism from some quarters. Some industry observers have claimed that alleged "shortages" of U.S. engineers and programmers were exaggerated, and that employers were paying foreign workers less and assigning heavier workloads. In fact, between 2000 and 2007, the U.S. Labor Department found that six Boston-area companies were in violation of rules governing H-1B employment (requiring prevailing pay rates in the industry) and ordered back pay issued to those employees. Like trade union workers of an earlier era, many native-born tech workers resented these practices, charging that employers were using the H-1B program to create a class of "techno-slaves," thereby undercutting the pay and job security of American workers. Related complaints were common among nurses, who argued that hospitals were relying on quick fixes in the form of immigrant workers rather than addressing the larger problems of compensation, working conditions, and career development that were discouraging the native-born from pursuing nursing careers. Others observed that by relying on foreign-trained medical and nursing school graduates, the United States was effectively shirking its responsibility to provide adequate social investment in education.<sup>37</sup>

Criticism of foreign worker recruitment also centered on its impact on the migrants' home countries. During the Cold War, when doctors, scientists, engineers, and other professionals were being lured from developing countries, scholars dubbed this process "the brain drain." The loss of these valued and scarce workers was a blow to many hard-pressed regions of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where their skills were desperately needed. Global integration scholars later challenged this view, suggesting that the migration of skilled labor also created a "brain-exchange" in which returning migrants brought new skills and experience back to their home countries and fostered an international exchange of ideas and services.<sup>38</sup> While the rise of transnational companies in the Boston area (especially Indian and Chinese-owned firms) suggested that such brain exchanges were in fact occurring, the loss of professional talent from countries like Nigeria, Haiti, and the Philippines remained a serious problem.

In the Boston area, however, skilled immigrant workers did serve as an important engine for economic development by founding dozens of start-ups in fields like computer software, data systems, medical devices, and biotechnology. Between 1995 and 2005, 29% of all science and engineering firms in Massachusetts were founded by at least one foreign-born partner. A study of the local biotech industry in 2007 discovered that more than a quarter of biotech firms in the state were founded by immigrants, mainly from Asia, Europe, and Canada. Such ventures, concentrated in and around Cambridge and Route 128, contributed more than four thousand jobs to the local economy.<sup>39</sup>

MIT and other Boston-area universities have been fertile breeding grounds for such ventures, but ironically, some of the barriers that immigrants faced in the United States have also encouraged such entrepreneurship. Amar Sawhney, an Indian-born Sikh who founded two Boston-area medical device firms in the 1990s, explained how his lack of a green card moved him into a start-up. After finishing his master's degree in chemical engineering, he said, "I applied for thirty positions with companies that came to the campus and twenty-nine of them sent me a rejection letter. And the last one, when I went for the interview, they realized I didn't have a green card and they rejected me." He then decided to continue on for a Ph.D. and jumped at a chance to join a start-up a few years later. "If you have not much to lose," Sawhney said, "you take more risks and you try harder." Other immigrants noted that encountering "a glass ceiling" because of their race or religion convinced them to leave their jobs and start their own firms. As the region's manufacturing base continued to shrink, these immigrant-owned companies provided new jobs in a field that combined two of the region's leading knowledge industries—medicine and technology—in what has proved to be a key area of economic growth in the twenty-first century.<sup>40</sup>

## THE BIMODAL ECONOMY

The concentration of immigrant workers at the top and bottom rungs of the urban economy is a reflection of what economists refer to as the "hourglass" or "bimodal" economy. In greater Boston, European and Asian immigrants—particularly those from India, Korea, Japan, and Taiwan—have been most concentrated at the top professional and technical end of the hourglass, while Latino, Southeast Asian, and Afro-Caribbean migrants have made up a disproportionate share of workers on the lower end. Prior educational achievements, English proficiency, and occupational skills have often determined where one lands in the new economy, so those from

poorer countries with fewer educational resources have been at a distinct disadvantage. Racial bias and employer preferences—typically for European, non-Muslim Asian, or lighter-skinned Latino workers—have also shaped the workforce options of new immigrants, consigning many to low-paid, unorganized, and unstable sectors of the economy.<sup>41</sup>

The bimodal economy has thus produced divergent economic outcomes and prospects for the social integration of immigrants. In recent years, highly-educated newcomers have enjoyed much more rapid social mobility and integration than those who arrived a hundred years ago. The proliferation of high-earning immigrant professionals has been a striking development that has diversified many Boston workplaces, schools, and neighborhoods and has laid the groundwork for continued prosperity and integration of the second generation. On the other end of the economic scale, however, the growth of low-income and often socially marginalized migrant populations has been a worrisome trend. Concentrated in some of Boston's poorer neighborhoods and in the region's older industrial towns and cities, low-income migrant workers have struggled to survive in a region where housing and living costs have been driven steadily upward by real estate and consumer markets geared to high-end workers of the knowledge economy.

Although the foreign-born of greater Boston have had consistently high rates of workforce participation, the low pay, instability, and sometimes exploitative terms of that employment—combined with low levels of education and English proficiency among many immigrants—have resulted in lower wages and family incomes. In 2011, Boston's foreign-born employees earned approximately three-quarters the wages earned by the native born, and over the course of the preceding thirty years the median income of foreign-born families had fallen in comparison with that of the native born: in 1980, the median income of the city's foreign-born families was only 6% below that of the native born. That differential grew to 9% in 1990, 12% in 2000, and by 2010 was 17%. This growing inequality has resulted in part from the rapid growth of lower-paid service work among immigrants, but even among professional and managerial workers, average foreign-born income lags significantly behind.<sup>42</sup>

For many working-class immigrant families, these low incomes have produced severe economic pressures, requiring many to work multiple jobs to survive. Since many have also been responsible for supporting needy relatives back home, the hardships have been even greater. Furthermore, for those in hard-pressed older industrial cities, eroding tax bases and substandard education and services have posed critical obstacles to the educational and social advancement of their children. For the second generation, incorporation

into American society has often meant joining a low-wage and predominantly nonwhite employment sector—with little likelihood of completing college or moving into the middle or upper ranks of the economy.

For some foes of immigration reform, these grim realities suggest that newcomers have harmed the US economy and lowered American living standards. In metro Boston, however, immigrant labor has been indispensable to the new service-based economy, at both the top and bottom ends. As in many older northeastern cities that saw steep population losses after World War II, the Boston area labor force and economy simply could not have grown and flourished without new immigrants. Moreover, the region's knowledge economy has not been a zero-sum game in which foreign-born workers simply took jobs from the native born. In ethnic businesses across the region, and particularly in the high-tech fields, immigrant entrepreneurs have added thousands of jobs to the local economy, contributing to the long-term revitalization of the metro area. The ongoing challenge of the bimodal economy, then, has been to find more equitable ways to train and integrate new immigrant workers and to promote-through more affordable housing, better labor laws and enforcement, and improved education—a more widely shared prosperity.

**Further Reading: *Immigration and Metropolitan Revitalization in the United States***

Marilynn Johnson's work contributes to a growing number of studies that document the critical role played by new immigrant groups in reversing urban decline in cities across the nation. In the January 2018 issue of the *Historical Journal of Massachusetts* we published an article excerpted from Llana Barber's illuminating study of Lawrence, titled *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945–2000* (2017). For readers who wish to explore this new literature more broadly, HJM editors recommend another new work, *Immigration and Metropolitan Revitalization in the United States*, edited by Domenic Vitiello and Thomas J. Sugrue (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016). The following summary is from the publisher.

In less than a generation, the dominant image of American cities has transformed from one of crisis to revitalization. Poverty, violence, and distressed schools still make headlines, but central cities and older suburbs are attracting new residents and substantial capital investment. In most accounts, native-born empty nesters, their twenty-something children, and other educated professionals are credited as the agents of change. Yet in the

past decade, policy makers and scholars across the United States have come to understand that immigrants are driving metropolitan revitalization at least as much and belong at the center of the story. Immigrants have repopulated central city neighborhoods and older suburbs, reopening shuttered storefronts and boosting housing and labor markets, in every region of the United States.

*Immigration and Metropolitan Revitalization in the United States* is the first book to document immigrant-led revitalization, with contributions by leading scholars across the social sciences. Offering radically new perspectives on both immigration and urban revitalization and examining how immigrants have transformed big cities such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, as well as newer destinations such as Nashville and the suburbs of Boston and New Jersey, the volume's contributors challenge traditional notions of revitalization, often looking at working-class communities. They explore the politics of immigration and neighborhood change, demolishing simplistic assumptions that dominate popular debates about immigration. They also show how immigrants have remade cities and regions in Latin America, Africa, and other places from which they come, linking urbanization in the United States and other parts of the world.<sup>43</sup>

One reviewer writes that:

This volume brings together cutting-edge research on revitalization from leading social scientists across a range of fields, from demography and economics to geography, history, sociology, and urban planning. . . . An important book with implications for today's cities and municipalities—both those experienced with immigration and those facing fresh change.<sup>44</sup>

Editor Domenic Vitiello is an Associate Professor of City Planning and Urban Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Thomas J. Sugrue is Professor of Social and Cultural Analysis and History at New York University. In a *The Global Urban History Project* blog posting they explain that:

Our new edited volume shows what is at stake for cities in disputes over immigration policy. Its ten essays by urban social historians and allied social scientists explore the deep relationship between immigration and urban transformations in recent decades in the U.S. as well as in sending communities

in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The chapters . . . illuminate how crucial immigration has been for the fortunes of cities, suburbs, and small towns worldwide.<sup>45</sup>

Vitiello and Sugrue go on to discuss the various analytic frameworks that have been used to analyze immigration in both the scholarly literature and popular imagination. They conclude that:

The narrative of “revitalization” . . . holds greater promise to sway popular and policy debates nationally, and it already has more proponents amongst city and suburban public, private, and third sector leaders. More constructive than most stances on immigration, the frame of “revitalization” emphasizes the opportunities and benefits that immigration and immigrants have created for receiving communities as much as newcomers. Unlike the frame of “costs and benefits,” it casts immigration and metropolitan development as more than a zero-sum game. Revitalization also presents important challenges and opportunities for scholarship, for – as the authors in our volume demonstrate – it is a dynamic, diverse, unequal, and highly contested phenomenon, much like immigration.

It is vital to understand these debates from both a historical and contemporary perspective. Domenic Vitiello and Thomas J. Sugrue’s *Immigration and Metropolitan Revitalization in the United States*, along with Llana Barber’s illuminating study *Latino City: Immigration and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945–2000* (2017) and Marilyn S. Johnson’s *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s* (2015), all offer critical perspectives for understanding these contemporary immigration issues and debates in Massachusetts.

L. Mara Dodge, Editor

HJM

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