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### 2. Introduction

The United States has been characterized as a "melting pot" in which each ingredient blends into a single dish. Likewise, the United States has been characterized as a "salad bowl" in which each ingredient reserves its own flavor and texture while contributing to the aggregate salad. Perhaps, President Jimmy Carter characterized the nature of the United States best ... "We become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams." So who is an "American"? How do YOU define an "American"? Ever since its founding in 1776, and even before then, the United States has attracted immigrants from around the world. For well over two centuries, people have flocked under this nation's protective wings as opportunists, sojourners, missionaries, refugees, and even illegal aliens. With the Statue of Liberty greeting Europeans entering Ellis Island, and The Golden Gate Bridge greeting Chinese and other Asians into San Francisco, the U.S. has long since been a refuge of the world, with opportunities abound and freedom for all. Over time, millions around the world have found emigrating to the U.S. as the only alternative to starvation, death, or a life full of hardship and suffering. With thousands from nations spanning the globe, America has become a mosaic of people, culture, and hope.

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### 3. A nation of nations

Immigration is the most important aspect of US history. Immigration to the United States of America is the movement of non-residents to the United States, and has been a major source of population growth and cultural change throughout much of the American history even though the foreign born have never been more than 15% of the population since about 1675. The economic, social and political aspects of immigration has caused controversy regarding race, ethnicity, religion, economic benefits, job growth, settlement patterns, impact on upward social mobility, levels of criminality, nationalities, political loyalties, moral values, and work habits. Given the distance of North America from Eurasia, most historical U.S. immigration was a riskful venture, which inspired myths and dreams of prosperity and opportunity not found in the Old World. Since the advent of international jet travel in the 1960s, travel to the United States has been made easy by air, but remains difficult, expensive and dangerous for some illegally crossing the Mexican border at unauthorized points. For the most people in Europe and worldwide, the US were the best opportunity for making a better life over their situation in the 'old country'. This is well-known as the American Dream. The conflict and mixing of cultures contributed to making discrimination, economic exploitation, anti-foreign movements, and debates over equality, opportunity, and social identity. There has never been a single national culture. So we can say that the US are a nation of nations. A melting-pot (a mosaic with many discrete pieces) is the best metaphor for understanding the American society.

----- OSTATAK TEKSTA NIJE PRIKAZAN. CEO RAD MOŽETE  
PREUZETI NA SAJTU. -----

[www.maturskiradovi.net](http://www.maturskiradovi.net)

MOŽETE NAS KONTAKTIRATI NA E-MAIL: [maturskiradovi.net@gmail.com](mailto:maturskiradovi.net@gmail.com)