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**“A Bundle of Silences: Reimagining Interpretive Approaches to the Past”
Webinar Transcript**

Interpretive Theme: Movement of People

Webinar Title: Movement of People in New Jersey

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WEBINAR TRANSCRIPT:

New Jersey is home to one of the most diverse and mobile populations in the country. It has long been the site of the circulation of people into, within, and out of the state—whether they chose to move or were forced, or whether borders shifted around them. In this webinar, we trace how the movement of people in New Jersey over the past 250 years has impacted society and economy.

We begin in Part I with an overview of the early republican period in New Jersey against the backdrop of a developing nation of immigrants. In Part II, we examine New Jersey in the age of mass immigration of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century transformations in urban and rural landscapes. Part III explores how migrations of the past 50 years continue to reshape the state through a focus on Puerto Ricans and South Asians. Along the way, we address topics such as displacement, migration and immigration, transnationalism, urbanization and suburbanization, and more.

PART I: New Jersey and the Birth of a Nation of Immigrants

Early European settlement went hand-in-hand with constricted mobilities of others, most notably indigenous and enslaved Africans. The Lenape or Delaware peoples and their precursors

were New Jersey's earliest inhabitants. At the outset of the seventeenth century, about 12,000 lived in small groups that moved throughout the region and survived primarily through hunting and fishing. As more Europeans settled the area, the Lenape population declined drastically from disease and conflict.

After the English overtook the Dutch in 1644 and founded the colony of New Jersey, more people joined the small settlements along the Hudson River. Many came from nearby colonies, rather than directly from Europe. Some were refugees from political instability or religious persecution, while others sought economic advancement. The English acquired indigenous lands through systematic purchase, and the military conflicts of the eighteenth century put a permanent end to the Lenape's ability to freely roam. Many were forced to abandon their lands and relocated further west into Ohio and beyond. During the war, indigenous groups allied with both loyalists and patriots, lured by promises of protection of territorial rights from both sides.

In 1758, dozens of New Jersey Lenape were confined to the Brotherton Reservation in Burlington County, where poverty threatened their survival, and conversion to Christianity further eroded their traditional culture. By 1802, those who remained sold the land to the state and migrated to New York and eventually Wisconsin. As part of the attempt to educate indigenous children in Western culture, in the mid-eighteenth century a handful went to Princeton University. The founders of Rutgers University distanced themselves from educating "heathen" Indians on their new campus and associated grammar school.¹ Several indigenous children were separated from their families and sent to a boarding school in Connecticut, where they became culturally isolated.

Slaves and free people of color also moved through New Jersey in the revolutionary era. Dutch merchants had earlier crossed the Hudson River with slaves who labored on New Jersey farms. By 1790 more than 11,000 people were enslaved in New Jersey. Republican ideas of freedom and equality did not benefit all. New Jersey adopted a law for the gradual abolition of slavery in 1804, but it only applied to children. Those who had been promised freedom in exchange for serving the Continental Army had to rely on masters upholding the bargain. Others escaped bondage by fleeing to New York City and Philadelphia. Opportunities for advancement for most free blacks in New Jersey were limited, and many moved onward, even emigrating to British Caribbean colonies. By 1860, free blacks comprised only 4 percent of the state's population.

New Jersey served as a significant corridor of the Underground Railroad, a network of white abolitionists, Quakers, and free Blacks who offered shelter and assistance to those who escaped their masters in the south. New Brunswick—with a significant free Black population and access to roads, rail, and rivers—became a critical node for the northern passageway through Delaware and Pennsylvania en route to New York City or Canada. The famous fugitive slave and abolitionist Harriet Tubman operated from Cape May.

The young state of New Jersey was primarily white and agrarian. The first national census of 1790 counted 184,000 residents, most of them white. 50 percent were English, and just under 70 percent came from the British Isles (Wales, Scotland, and Ireland). 20 percent had Dutch ancestry and concentrated in Bergen and Somerset Counties, and 10 percent came from Germany and elsewhere. Moreover, religious tolerance in New Jersey—compared to other colonies—had attracted settlers of different Protestant denominations. The population of New Jersey doubled between 1790 and 1840, when it reached 373,000.

From the outset, then, New Jersey was marked by ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity, which at times produced conflict among the settlers and with indigenous groups. New York City and Philadelphia emerged as major commercial centers that drew people away from New Jersey. Without a major new immigrant group settling the state, white New Jerseyans began to develop a common cultural identity as “American.”

After 1840, as industrialization took hold in Europe and changes in agriculture disrupted traditional life, along with political and religious conflicts, farmers moved to European cities or abroad. For the next several decades, most New Jersey immigrants came from Ireland, Germany, England, Scotland, and Wales. With the failure of the potato crop in Ireland in 1845 and subsequent famine, about 1.5 million mostly rural Irish left for the United States. They faced hardship and discrimination as low-paid laborers who lacked the industrial experience of Germans and British. Some newspaper classified ads for domestic service even specified that Irish should not apply or posted a preference for Protestants or Americans.ⁱⁱ

The onset of manufacturing jobs in areas close to New York such as Jersey City and Paterson further encouraged immigration to these expanding industrial cities. Newark became especially known for its artisan workshops and leather and textiles, and from 1840 to 1860 its population grew from 17,000 to 72,000. Northern urban populations were majority immigrant, in contrast to the surrounding countryside and southern counties. American-born individuals, even when not in the majority, dominated in wealth and property ownership.

New Jerseyans of European descent began to distinguish themselves from immigrants moving into the northeast. English settlers had crafted the nation as white, English-speaking, and largely Protestant. New arrivals were expected to adapt to this culture. Anglo-Americans viewed the different religious and social practices of new Irish and German immigrants—who tended to

be poorer and Catholic—as threats to their values, particularly the Protestant work ethic that stressed thrift and sobriety. In 1849 the American or Know Nothing Party (which referred to the secrecy of its members and rituals) formed in opposition to immigration and Catholicism, especially its role in public education and affairs.

Protestant reformers attempted to use their publicly-funded schools to “Americanize” Irish and German immigrants through religious influence. Immigrants responded by establishing their own parochial schools and demanding funding from the state, which inspired Protestant fear that Catholics would take over public school in cities. In 1875 an amendment to the state constitution guaranteed free public education for all children.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the population of the state surged to nearly half a million, which included 31,000 Irish and thousands of other immigrants from Germany, Britain, Italy, Hungary, and Poland. New Jersey was no longer the agrarian and Protestant state that had emerged from the Revolutionary War.

PART II: New Jersey in the Age of Mass Immigration

In the first century of the new republic, most immigrants had come from northern and western Europe. In the decades prior to World War I, however, Italians, Polish, Russian, Greeks, and others made up the bulk of newcomers. Beginning in the 1880s, southern and eastern Europeans confronted economic changes and dislocation from their land. They were drawn to opportunities in large cities such as New York, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Chicago, where developing U.S. industries increasingly sought unskilled workers for factory jobs.

In 1892 the federal government opened a new immigration station on Ellis Island in New York Harbor to receive the new influx. Many Americans are familiar with the narrative of the 12

million immigrants who arrived in the nation through Ellis Island until it closed in 1954. A common pattern was for a family member (usually male) to immigrate first, find work, and save enough money to fund the passage of brothers, wives, and children. Most immigrants would have traveled as third-class passengers, crowded into unsanitary lower levels of steamships for the Atlantic crossing. All these groups faced hardship and oftentimes discrimination, as well as pressure to assimilate, becoming American in the process. Many immigrants maintained social, economic, political, and cultural ties to their home countries through letter writing, remittances, investment, ethnic associations, and (when possible) return trips, even as they planted roots in their new settings.

While in the nineteenth century most Asian immigrants are associated with California, some made their way to New Jersey. In 1870, for example, 150 Chinese laborers who had entered through San Francisco arrived to construct the railroad connecting Pompton, New Jersey, with Middletown, New York. Although Irish dominated railroad construction, the company faced shortages after Irish employees abandoned the treacherous work.ⁱⁱⁱ For decades, perceived competition among unskilled laborers stirred an anti-Chinese sentiment that cast Chinese as an economic threat and of inferior racial stock. In 1882 the Chinese Exclusion Act barred Chinese laborers from entry, while allowing exemptions for merchants and students. Still, Chinese from Latin America and the Caribbean entered at Ellis Island or by other land and sea borders. The Chinese Exclusion Act solidified the U.S. role as a gatekeeper nation that excluded those thought to be morally and racially deficient.

As New Jersey entered the age of mass immigration in the 1880s, immigrants became convenient scapegoats, especially during periods of economic downturn, and nativist groups demanded restrictions on entry in subsequent decades. The Immigration Act of 1924 established

national origin quotas that were based on an earlier population census. It was intentionally designed to slow immigration from southern and eastern Europe in favor of northern and western regions. It closed the gates even further for Asian immigrants. The period from 1924 to 1965 is therefore known as an era of exclusion in U.S. immigration history, marked by nativist sentiment and legal barriers to entry. However, the movement of people during this period continued to be dynamic, especially during and after World War II. New faces appeared in New Jersey factories and farms with the migration of Blacks from the U.S. South, labor recruitment, and refugee programs.

The Great Migration

Beginning in the 1910s through the 1970s, about six million African Americans migrated from the rural South to urban and industrial cities in the North. Like immigrants, Southern blacks fled violence and oppression and sought opportunities for economic betterment. Black migrants settled in New Jersey cities such as Newark, Paterson, and Camden, where they found work as unskilled laborers, custodians, maids, and other occupations. Despite the similarities, however, this massive movement of descendants of enslaved Africans is generally not considered a part of U.S. immigration history.

Wealthy urban dwellers began to move away from city centers during the 1910s and 1920s. Federal policies enacted during the Depression and World War II stimulated movement to more affordable distant suburbs with low-cost mortgages for middle- and working-class families who otherwise could not have been homeowners. However, these agencies reinforced racial and class segregation in housing. Localities implemented discriminatory policies and practices such as redlining that led to segregated neighborhoods. With limited options, Black urban residents

paid high rents for substandard housing. Beginning in the 1950s, suburban shopping centers exacerbated urban decline and racial and class segregation, as they were largely inaccessible to poor and non-white city-dwellers. Many New Jersey businesses closed or moved to the suburbs. Moreover, suburbs became spaces for the consolidation of a white identity among descendants of Irish, Italians, and other groups who had once been the targets of discrimination.

Labor Recruitment

While immigration subsided, the need for labor remained in New Jersey and in the nation. Puerto Ricans had been classified as U.S. citizens since 1917 and, like Black migrants, are not considered immigrants. During World War II, Puerto Rico's economy shifted from agriculture to industry, leading to a surplus of displaced workers on the island. With the end of the war, the U.S. Department of Labor recruited Puerto Ricans for both agricultural and industrial work in New York, New Jersey, and elsewhere. As a result of this postwar migration, the Puerto Rican population on the U.S. mainland grew to nearly 1.5 million by 1970.

While World War II spurred mobility for some groups, it constrained others, including Japanese. Seabrook Farms, a large agribusiness known for frozen vegetables in South Jersey, became a microcosm of guestworkers from around the world. Wartime production needs enabled Seabrook to employ Puerto Ricans and Jamaicans, U.S. Southern Blacks, as well as a small group of German POWs and (after the war) Estonian refugees. Seabrook also sponsored over 2,500 paroled Japanese Americans and immigrants of Japanese descent who had been incarcerated in U.S. internment camps. To varying degrees, these groups encountered restrictions on mobility, inflexible work regimes, and at times discrimination.

A lesser-known part of this story is that over 500 Japanese Peruvians who had been forcibly sent to the United States as “enemy aliens” ended up at Seabrook. Seiichi Higashide (1909-1997) immigrated to Peru as a young man in 1930, where he became a shopkeeper, married a Japanese Peruvian woman, and started a family. During the war, he and other Japanese Peruvians were detained in Crystal City, Texas, then released for work at Seabrook Farms. In his memoir, Higashide recalls feelings of dislocation and long workdays in a semi-constrained environment: “Although we worked at the same factory, my wife and I were in different sections and were on different shifts; we seldom saw each other except for the one free day every two weeks. If we needed to communicate with each other, we left hastily scribbled notes on the kitchen table before we went to work.”^{iv}

Refugees

Another stream of immigrants who entered the U.S. after World War II were Europeans escaping persecution and authoritarian regimes. With the onset of the Cold War, those fleeing communism were granted preferred status, and legislation and special programs assisted with refugee resettlement. In 1956 and 1957, over 32,000 Hungarian war refugees resided at Camp Kilmer in Piscataway before they were resettled with homes and jobs. Many remained in Central Jersey and worked for Johnson & Johnson or other companies. The refugees were relatively young, educated, and skilled, which contributed to the general success of the program. Among them were Hungarian Jews whose businesses had been nationalized and who no longer would be able to educate their children in Jewish religion and culture. College-age youth benefitted from scholarships and English language training. The model of public and private cooperation begun at Camp Kilmer continues today.^v

The experience with Hungarian refugees influenced policies and practices with the next major group to come to U.S. shores—Cubans in the aftermath of the 1959 revolution. One of the main differences from the Hungarian 56'ers is that most Cubans considered themselves exiles and expected to return to the island they called home. Moreover, some received assistance from a small prerevolutionary community of compatriots already in the United States. As the exiles' hopes for a regime change were dashed, however, continued flows of Cubans received food, clothing, health care, and job training.

Soon afterward, the federal Cuban Refugee Program relocated Cubans from Miami to different states, including New Jersey. A substantial number settled in Union City and West New York, soon comprising half the population of these cities. Others relocated to Newark, Elizabeth, and Irvington, joining earlier communities of Puerto Ricans. Manufacturing plants in Hudson County attracted middle- and working-class Cubans arriving in the 1960s and 1970s after the nationalization of small businesses in Cuba. Among these were Chinese and Jewish immigrants from the island. Demographics would continue to change with subsequent waves of Cuban immigrants, joined by other groups from Latin America and the Caribbean.

As we see from this discussion, the so-called restrictive era in U.S. immigration history after 1924 was in fact characterized by dynamic flows of refugees and migrants. The most restrictive aspects were overturned in 1965.

PART III: New Jersey's Global Routes^{vi}

The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act removed discrimination based on race and national origin in favor of quota limits of 20,000 immigrants from each country, while it upheld preference for family reunification, skilled labor, and refugees. It capped immigration from

within the hemisphere for the first time. One of the unintended consequences of the 1965 law was to spur emigration from Latin America and Asia. As with prior waves, these groups have fled oppression, sought out economic opportunity—or both—and many settle in urban centers.

Since 1965, Latinos and Asians have been the two fastest growing groups in the United States and in New Jersey, whose population is about 20 percent Latino and 10 percent Asian. New Jersey counts with nearly 1,800,000 Latinos. Puerto Ricans and Cubans continue to settle in the state, joined by Dominicans, Mexicans, and others from South and Central America, including those of indigenous heritage who speak languages other than Spanish. New Jersey's Asian population of 870,000 is equally as diverse, comprised of people from India, the Philippines, and East and Southeast Asia, with different histories, cultural traditions, languages, and religions. Since 2000, Asian Americans have had the highest growth rate among all racial and ethnic groups, followed by Latinos. They are projected to be the largest immigrant group in the nation by mid-century.

Given the unprecedented growth of these two groups, we now turn to a discussion of the impact of post-1965 migration on New Jersey through two case studies: Puerto Ricans, with a focus on educational access, and South Asians, with a focus on community development.

Case Study: Puerto Ricans and Educational Access

The landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964 emerged as Black and Puerto Rican urban communities across the country shone a spotlight on the inequalities they experienced in access to employment, housing, and education. In New Jersey, Puerto Ricans have participated in civil rights and anti-poverty campaigns for over half a century. They were inspired by Black movements and adopted similar organizational strategies, even while recognizing their

significant differences as a Spanish-speaking community from a U.S. colony. Puerto Rican struggles for rights and inclusion in the 1970s can be viewed through the lens of access to higher education in New Jersey.

Puerto Ricans were the first large-scale Spanish-speaking population in New Jersey. Like other migrants before them, many initially settled in New York City before crossing the river. The 1970 census counted 136,000 Puerto Ricans in New Jersey, with about half born locally. Like Blacks, Puerto Ricans experienced treatment as second-class citizens and encountered barriers to mobility: discrimination in employment, deteriorating housing, poor health care, and low educational levels. 68% of Puerto Rican workers were categorized as low income.

New Jersey public colleges and universities provide one way to narrow the gap in education and future employment and earnings. However, public school systems inadequately prepared Blacks, Puerto Ricans, and other minorities for entrance into these institutions, and for success once they were admitted. Black and Puerto Rican high school students were often pushed toward a vocational rather than academic diploma, making them uncompetitive for college admission.

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, growing awareness of these disparities coalesced with global anti-war and civil rights movements. Demands for Ethnic Studies programs reverberated across U.S. college campuses. The minority students who joined these movements at public universities demanded expanded access to higher education and a curriculum that reflected their own histories and cultures.

In the summer of 1969, a group of Puerto Rican students across all Rutgers University campuses (Newark, New Brunswick, and Camden) took their education into their own hands. They had two immediate goals: the recruitment and retention of Puerto Rican students, faculty,

and staff, and the development of new courses and cultural programming on Puerto Rico, migration, and the broader Latin American and Caribbean region. That same year the experimental Livingston College was founded on the site of the former Camp Kilmer in Piscataway, where Hungarian refugees fleeing revolution had been housed over a decade earlier. The coeducational liberal arts college became a laboratory for innovative programs and recruited nontraditional students, women, veterans, and racial minorities to Rutgers.

Through the efforts of Puerto Rican student activists and faculty allies, the Program in Puerto Rican Studies began at Livingston in 1970 and gained department status in 1973 under the direction of its first Chairperson, Maria Canino Arroyo. Their struggles would continue through the decade with campus organizing and protests. A 1974 report concluded that despite increased admissions after 1969, Puerto Ricans comprised fewer than two percent of college students statewide.

One of these college students was Mercedes Valle. She grew up in Newark in the 1950s and 1960s, where she attended public and Catholic schools and faced challenges learning English and discrimination in a predominantly Italian area. After high school, she worked as a secretary, then attended community college. With help from the leadership and education organization ASPIRA, she transferred to Livingston College and joined the Puerto Rican Student Organization on campus.

Today, several of the former student activists of the 1970s hold prominent roles in politics, business, education, and local communities. As a child psychologist for Newark public schools, Valle comments: “I do a lot of work with Latino families, basically, to tell them their rights, to help them understand what they can and can't do in terms of resolving issues at school. Most of the population I have served here in Newark has been Latino, Dominicans,

Puerto Ricans, Ecuadorians who come here and really don't know what a school district is like or what are their rights.”^{vii}

The activists of the 1970s understood that for true mobility to occur, it was insufficient to merely *admit* more minority students. Schools would need to work with communities to prepare students for college and educate them about scholarships and financial aid. Today, we continue to face these issues as new immigrant populations settle in New Jersey and new first-generation students aspire to higher education.

Case Study: South Asians and Community Development

When discussing the history of South Asian immigration to New Jersey, earlier streams of traders and circuitous routes are less known. In the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, sojourning Muslims from Bengal would arrive at Ellis Island with bags of embroidered silk and cotton fabrics from their home villages. They made their way to New Jersey's beach resorts in Atlantic City, Asbury Park, and Long Branch, selling their “exotic goods” to a rising American middle class. Hundreds of seamen from British India escaped ships in New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, finding work and starting families with Puerto Ricans and African Americans as well as West Indians in New Orleans.

After the passage of the 1965 law, with its preference for skilled workers and family unification, immigration from Asia also increased. Some immigrants of Asian descent in New Jersey came from Latin America and the Caribbean, especially Indo-Guyanese. Kokila Bahadur descends from Asian Indians who had been recruited as indentured laborers in British Guiana in the decades after abolition. She worked as a midwife on a sugar estate, when she saw an advertisement recruiting nurse trainees for the Jersey City Medical Center. Although she was a

married mother of two, she made the journey to the United States alone in 1966, the year Guyana gained independence from Britain. She recalls her first residence in New Jersey, a dormitory for foreign nurses that she describes as “the world in one place.” Other nurses came from the Philippines, Kerala, and the West Indies. The 1965 immigration law allowed for sponsorship of additional family members. Bahadur made several return trips and assisted her immediate family as well as dozens of other relatives to follow in her path.^{viii}

Shardra Badri immigrated from Guyana in 1976 at the age of nine. Her parents were initially sponsored by a friend, and three years later they brought Shardra to Linden, New Jersey, then Elizabeth. She recalls feeling overwhelmed from the buildings, crowds, and cars, along with frigid winter temperatures. She says, “There was a mixed community, but mainly white and Polish. When we moved to Elizabeth there was only a handful of Guyanese people, maybe there was like two or three families that lived within the area. So it was very difficult for us to grow up with Guyanese influence in our life because there wasn’t any.”^{ix} Most of her contact with fellow Guyanese happened when visiting relatives in New York. In subsequent decades, Indo-Guyanese would encounter growing South Asian communities.

Over the past half century, changes in the urban and suburban landscapes reflect the new movements of people. In the 1980s local businesses on Oak Tree Road in Edison began to close due to the construction of malls and other factors, which left an opening for recently arrived immigrants to establish restaurants, grocery stores, and jewelry, clothing, and fabric shops. In 1990 the H-1B temporary nonimmigrant visa category (with potential for permanent status) boosted continued immigration from South Asia. Several longtime Indian business owners in New York City eventually moved to New Jersey in search of a suburban lifestyle and more affordable rents. Today, hundreds of small businesses in what is known as “Little India” reflects

the diversity of South Asians locally and throughout the United States. Customers are greeted by Bollywood music, fragrances of *chaat* (or Indian street food), and festival lights and decor.

Rutgers University alumni Megha Vyas (2012) recalls growing up in the Hilltop Estates apartment complex in Edison, a first stop for South Asian immigrant families who settle in New Jersey with the dream of eventually buying a suburban house. The apartments had housed Hungarian refugees from Camp Kilmer in the 1960s, followed by Vietnamese and Koreans in the 1970s and mostly Gujaratis and Punjabis in the 1980s and 1990s. A typical scenario would include the elderly sitting in courtyards and discussing homeland news and politics in their native languages, second-generation children playing together amidst the laundromats and playgrounds, while adults went to work. With the transnational movements of people come the circulation of goods, cultural traditions, and knowledge. Edison serves as a hub for these commodities. Dish Network satellites on rooftops provide immigrants with programming directly from India, whether it be cricket matches, soap operas, or news. Print copies of the monthly magazine *Little India*, established in 1991 with a focus on Indians in the diaspora, can be picked up at local businesses.^x

Elegant Affairs began in 1992 when three sisters turned their decorating instincts into a business, with support from their husbands on the weekends. Sharda Shenoy recalls starting with four poles to make a *mandap* (or covered structure) and decorating one wedding, then another, and so on. She says, “We did 100 weddings or so within two years. Now we do like 500 weddings per year.”^{xi} Word of mouth caught on, and the business expanded beyond weddings to include décor, floral creations, and structural designs for other cultural events across the nation. Shenoy adds that the business caters to different regional styles as well as mixed marriages combining Jewish and Hindu culture. Such businesses are key to reaching second and later

generations of children who—even as they are Americanized—want to preserve cultural elements from their South Asian heritage.

Like other immigrant groups before them who were perceived to be different, South Asians encounter moments of discrimination and violence directed at people and property. Few who lived in Jersey City in the late 1980s will forget the brutal physical attacks on Asian Indians. The community came together to mount a defense through public marches and the media, even as many feared leaving their homes. More recently, Edison's Asian Indian community has met opposition from local white residents and municipal restrictions on cultural gatherings. Despite their status as a more economically privileged, English-speaking “model minority” group, South Asians in the suburbs continue to experience marginalization and exclusion.

CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS: An Immigrant State

Immigration has been critical to New Jersey and the nation. Europeans had come to New Jersey for different reasons, including pursuit of political and religious freedom as well as economic opportunity. In the revolutionary era descendants of original settlers, who were of different ethnic, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, began thinking of themselves as American.

The movement of people in New Jersey has rarely been a one-way process, and assimilation has not meant a total erasure of ethnicity or severing of ties to home. A century ago, transnational households with family members scattered across international borders were not uncommon. Irish, Polish, Jewish, and Italians of the past followed home-country news and politics. Some adopted a national or panethnic identity (such as Italian or Asian American) out of need to organize to confront discrimination. Today, even as immigrants maintain transnational

ties, they build homes, families, and businesses in New Jersey, and join local community organizations and school boards. Furthermore, even the children and grandchildren of ethnic Americans maintain diasporic attachments. Global migrations have also produced complex identities, as we see with secondary migrations of Jewish Cubans or Indo-Guyanese who navigate multiple ethnic communities in New Jersey.

Lenape youth sent to Connecticut for education never forgot the families and communities they left behind in New Jersey. Despite the devastation of indigenous communities in New Jersey during the colonial and revolutionary periods, descendants of Lenape and other Native American groups today maintain traditions to pass on to their children. Throughout the Great Migration, African Americans in northern cities visited their southern hometowns when possible. Recently, however, a new pattern has emerged of Blacks moving to Southern cities, drawn by economic growth and modernization as well as kinship and cultural links.

A deeply embedded and longstanding antiblackness continues to uphold anti-immigrant policies and practices today. In the extreme nativist view, struggles of Black Americans are reduced to their own failures and counterposed to the hard work and values that enabled white ethnic immigrants to succeed. The forced migration and exploitation of Africans and their descendants and sustained violence and discrimination through the decades is underplayed. Newer Asian and Latino immigrants who claim to experience racial discrimination are expected to overcome this temporary setback, as did earlier groups who were also considered intrusions into white space, such as Irish and Italians. However, it was easier for Europeans to discard cultural and ethnic differences within a generation or two and melt into the broader “white” American experience than it was for people of color. Non-white immigrants—among them Latinos, Asians, and Middle Easterners—are cast as perpetual foreigners, no matter how many

generations they have been in the United States. Local ordinances attempt to restrict and exclude non-white immigrants from the rights and benefits of residing in suburban in New Jersey, including access to housing, education, and a decent livelihood, and to facilitate the removal of undocumented immigrants. As scholar Robyn Rodriguez succinctly states: “The tools that have long been used to keep blacks out of the suburbs are being used to keep immigrants out today.”^{xii}

From the revolutionary era through today, immigrants and their allies have been at the forefront of actions to contest such discriminatory policies and injustice, whether through protests on the street or challenges in court. Scholar Gary Okihiro highlights that the founders’ ideals and the core values of our nation today actually emanate from the margins, not the mainstream. He states: “. . .racial minorities, in their struggles for inclusion and equality, helped to preserve and advance the very privileges that were denied to them, and thereby democratized the nation for the benefit of all Americans.”^{xiii}

In her sweeping narrative of the Great Migration, Isabel Wilkerson’s comment about African Americans who moved north can be applied to immigrants throughout the centuries: “What binds these stories together was the back-against-the-wall, reluctant yet hopeful search for something better, any place but where they were. They did what human beings looking for freedom, throughout history, have often done. They left.”^{xiv}

And in the process of leaving, they create something new and “distinctly American.” New Jersey continues to be at the center of this ongoing process.

ⁱ At the time, Princeton was called College of New Jersey and Rutgers was called Queen’s College.

ⁱⁱ For regional examples of such classified advertisements see *New York Times*, November 10, 1854, May 1, 1855.

ⁱⁱⁱ “Chinese Exclusion in New Jersey: Immigration Law in the Past and Present,” New Jersey Digital Highway; *New York Times*, September 22, 1870.

^{iv} Higashide, *Adios to Tears*, 183.

^v Kevin Dragert, “Hungarian Refugees in the Cold War Era: Tracy Voorhees and the New Jersey Connection,” History Seminar Paper, Rutgers University, Spring 2107.

^{vi} This section title is inspired by the Rutgers-New Brunswick School of Arts and Sciences Signature Course *Immigrant States: Jersey’s Global Routes*, developed by Carlos Decena and Robyn Rodriguez.

^{vii} Mercedes Valle, Oral History Interview, July 13, 2018, by Aziel Rosado, Page 9, Rutgers Oral History Archives.

^{viii} Kokila Bahadur, Gaiutra Bahadur Fellowship Project, South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA). <https://www.saada.org/browse/collection/gaiutra-bahadur-fellowship-project/subject/kokila-bahadur>

^{ix} Sharda Badri, First Days Project, South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA). <https://firstdays.saada.org/story/sharda-badri>

^x Megha Vyas, “The Phenomena of Chain Migration: Asian Indian Immigration to New Jersey,” History Seminar Paper, Rutgers University, Spring 2011.

^{xi} New Jersey Multi-Ethnic Oral History Project Interview with Ms. Sharda Shenoy, Indian-American, Association of Indians in America (AIA). <https://doi.org/doi:10.7282/T34T6KZG>. The three sisters are Shobha Rao, Sharda Shenoy, and Suman Pai.

^{xii} Rodriguez, *In Liberty’s Shadow*, 10.

^{xiii} Okihiro, *Margins and Mainstreams*, 151.

^{xiv} Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, 15.