

May More Voices: Immigrants

Category: Immigrants

written by Paul Gross | May 1, 2025

Dear readers,

I am the son of immigrants. My mother lived through the Nazi occupation of Belgium and came to the US after World War II.

My father left Cuba in the 1930s. He was active in a pro-democracy group, and when Batista's secret police came looking for him, he decided that if he wanted to live, he needed to leave.

They both had accents, each one different. Because of what they'd experienced up close, they were both committed to democracy and fiercely proud of their adopted country.

As a family physician in the Bronx, when I looked at many of my patients, I saw my *abuela* or *abuelo*—my dad's parents, who immigrated to the US too late in their lives to learn English or ever feel quite at home here.

Some of my patients were undocumented, and I felt for them. They had no health insurance; they had trouble affording medications, even at our reduced-fee pharmacy.

I recall one woman in her thirties who came to me complaining of malaise and fatigue. She was working twelve-hour days as a housekeeper for a family in a wealthy suburb. Her young daughter was back in the Dominican Republic, living with her *abuela*, my patient's mom.

It didn't take a doctor to make a diagnosis, especially when all the test results came back normal: My patient was simply exhausted—and heartsick.

My two daughters were about her daughter's age. I wondered what it would take—how much suffering?—to make me think of leaving my girls for a foreign land in the hopes of sending home some money.

It was hard to conceive of, and yet many of my patients had lived this unhappy choice.

To hear some people talk, we should be afraid of immigrants. I'm sure that similar alarms were sounded back in the 1800s when waves of Irish immigrants came ashore, and then Italians and Jews. I think of Irving Berlin, born Israel Isidore Beilin, who arrived in the US at age five and went on to write *White Christmas* and *God Bless America*.

What olive- or dark-skinned Irving Berlin is right now being hunted down for deportation?

I've just learned of a colleague's fifty-one-year-old sister, in the US since age nine, and a permanent resident since 1994, who was detained by ICE in

February when she was returning home from a trip abroad. It's now May, and she's still in custody in Louisiana.

This is where we are.

This month's *More Voices* theme is [Immigrants](#). What has been your experience of immigrants or immigration—as an immigrant yourself, as the child of immigrants, as a healthcare provider for immigrants or as an immigrant health professional?

Share your story using the [More Voices Submission Form](#). For more details, visit [More Voices FAQs](#). And have a look at last month's theme: [Diversity](#).

Remember, your story should be 40-400 words. And no poetry, please.

We look forward to hearing from you. And thank you for being a part of this caring community.

With warm regards,

Paul Gross
Editor