

While it is easy to understand why people have a desire to migrate, it is harder to know how to handle the economic and social implications that mass migrations bring with them. Having lived in Switzerland my whole life, I see how the Swiss have and in some and are trying to deal with immigration and its effects. At the present time, 20% of the population in Switzerland consists of foreigners. Therefore, Switzerland is an easy microcosm to use when analyzing this global issue. This issue is heatedly discussed on the national level and seems to be one of the hardest 'problems' to solve. Unfortunately, there is an increasing atmosphere of xenophobia amongst many Swiss resulting from misunderstandings between the different cultures living in Switzerland. However, many forget that Switzerland is essentially a patchwork community which has learnt to accept each other's cultures and differences. This is clearly seen in us having four national languages, which come with four completely different cultures. The Swiss find sources of identification in their canton and language but still identify with each other on a national level. For me, this proves that the Swiss know how to live peacefully together and how to accept each other's differences. In that sense, I find it slightly ironic that foreign and local press is labeling Switzerland as a racist country that cannot deal with differences.

The immigrants, who are most debated about in Swiss politics today, immigrated to Switzerland during my life time. In the 1990's, the Yugoslavian War forced thousands of people to become refugees and to immigrate into safer and more prosperous countries, at least temporarily. This immigration, along with the immigrants of previous decades, most definitely had positive effects on Switzerland. A quarter of the workforce in Switzerland is foreign, a statistic which proves our need for foreign workers. Furthermore, immigration has led to Switzerland being a more multicultural, diverse community; shown for example in the rise of specialty food shops which we all benefit from. However, there are statistics presented which show that the criminal rate has risen in Switzerland and that approximately half of all crimes are committed by foreigners. These recent statistics have spurred on a series of initiatives and suggestions about what should be done about the issue. After the solutions presented by the SVP (Swiss Peoples Party) about how to deal with the foreigners; namely to expel them from Switzerland if they commit a crime here, caused outrage amongst many nationally and internationally. An English magazine dubbed Switzerland, 'the heart of darkness.'

I personally am definitely affected by the issue and do have my views on how the issue could or should be attempted to be solved. In my view, the most crucial point to immigration is whether or not the individual immigrant is able and willing to integrate themselves into their new 'home.' In my opinion, every new immigrant should be viewed as an individual with a chance to live in our country if they are willing to adapt to our culture and abide by our laws. Within their first year in Switzerland, at least an attempt should be made to learn the local language of the city. This is essential, as cooperation and understanding between the locals and the immigrant can only take place if they can communicate with each other. If an immigrant does not make the effort to do so, in my eyes, they don't show a desire to become a Swiss citizen or show an appreciation for the chance that they have been given. In addition to this, the immigrants should try and learn about Swiss culture and lifestyle and try, as much as they can without inhibiting their life significantly, to adapt their lives to it. However, the Swiss citizens need to show more dedication and commitment to trying to embrace change and the benefits we can all get from having an international community. The locals must give the immigrant a chance to immigrate, welcome them and help them adapt to their new environment. Through this cooperation, friendships can be made, knowledge about different cultures can be gained and integration can take place faster and more effectively.

I know that successfully integrating is possible. Many members of my family are immigrants. My maternal grandmother immigrated to Switzerland from Austria in search of work. My paternal grandmother came from Hong Kong with my father, his brother and my Grandfather, the only

fully Swiss person in our family. I have seen that they fully integrated into the Switzerland; they have many Swiss friends, they involve themselves in local activities and they both speak German fluently.

I find that with such a debated issue as immigration, cooperation and many compromises will have to be made until successes are evident. However, I am certain that Switzerland, which in its past has shown a great ability to create a patchwork nation, will be able to add another patch to their quilt and realize the benefits that can be gained from successful integration and amore international nation which this will lead to.