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One Sole Identity

Being a Refugee in a country where there is a constant disagreement over how Refugee should be treated. The only one is that is not entitled to have an opinion on how refugees should are the refugees themselves. Refugees are protected under the UNHCR, but by this protections to be given the title of refugee is difficult. From a political standpoint, to call someone an immigrant than a refugee is more beneficial to the government. While Immigrants and Refugees do share similar stories as to how they flee to another country and the challenges they endure when assimilating to a new life, they are not the same. But titles can be powerful. They can make one feel as if they do not matter in a society. Immigrants, Refugees, Exiles, and migrants all get bundled up into one category. Individuals deserve to the right to decide your own identity. In Viet Thanh Nguyen novel, *The Displaced*, two of the essays, *A Refugees Again* and *13 Ways of Being an Immigrants*, the understanding of what it means to be a refugee and what it means to have your own identity is set forth though these two types of essays although in today's society they are seen as the same, and by using other literary work such as *The Sympathizer* by Viet Thanh Nguyen you can see the struggle of identity a person faces internally. The literary work and storytelling are essential for the reader to comprehend they are different. Through the other genres that will be discussed throughout this essay, they will also connect to the argument that

through society and the connotations that names carry people lose their sense of identity because of this.

An Iranian Refugee named Porochista KhakPour, *13 ways of Being an Immigrant*, uses the style of writing that is meant for the reader to reflect back on their childhood and show how they can compare their own experiences to the one she writes about . I believe Khakpour decided to use the word immigrant in her essay as opposed to refugee because he felt that no one saw her as a refugee. She wanted to create her own identity and not be pushed into one category. The idea of being forced into a category is what pushed her to let it be known that she was the ability to make up her own identity instead of the one society pushed on her. She uses a list to describe the ways a person feels throughout their life as an immigrant. Each number is relatable in its own and made up of simple moments in life. Childhood experiences can be joyful and nostalgic, but Khakpour writes about the different perspective of childhood experiences. She writes about the ugly, the kind of disagreeable moments an immigrant faces in society. This type of writing uses emotions to appeal to the reader and provokes the reader to question their own identity instead of the one created for them.

Throughout *13 Ways to be an Immigrant*, word choice played an important factor in how KhakPour conveyed her argument. She used the pronoun “you” is used instead of “I”. By using this pronoun, it employed a psychological tactic that made the reader feel as they were the person that was telling her story. When she even recounted President Trump’s rise to presidency, she stated that even though she had been an American for almost two decades, “You wonder if your Americanness is forever and if you will die an American. “ (Khakpour) This powerful statement is relatable to many at this point in time due to the presidency. Khakpour sees herself as an

American. She calls herself American from that point on, and at the same time questions who she really is. Going back and forth, with being an American fully or to still hold on to her past life. Not many can call themselves American, so for her to do that makes a bold statement about how she wants the world to see her. She wanted to identify herself as an American and for it become part of her identity. To her, she is no longer an immigrant nor a refugee, she is American.

Compared to the previous essay, *A Refugee again*, is more traditional in choice of writing. This essay tells the story by using writing in the simplest, raw form. Vu Tran wrote this essay to dispute the definition of refugee. The beginning of the essay Tran describes how he saw himself as an immigrant instead of a refugee because, “A refugee felt like a thing of the past, a provisional status [He] once held that suggested vulnerability, inferiority, alienness” that he did not want attached to himself. (Tran) He did not know how he wanted to identify himself. He went back and forth between being called an immigrant or being called a refugee. The title of refugee carried all the connotations that he did not want, but at the same time did not feel as if he was an immigrant. As time went on, Tran reclaimed the title of refugee because he knew that although his experiences shared similarities he was not an immigrant. Tran asked himself the question: What is a refugee? By asking this question, he had to fully understand both worlds and the meaning that they carry. He was able to recognize that each story is different in its own way. Historically, the definition of refugee is changed and made to fit when appropriate. The title of refugee is used in different contexts and the way countries decide a person falls under that category is subjective and differ between countries. The idea that being a refugee is a simple definition is wrong because, “the American version alone offers a myriad of experiences that differ vastly by country, culture, and conflict of origin”. (Tran) This realization helps him

understand why he should not call himself an immigrant and instead call himself a refugee.

In *A Refugee Again*, the comparison of the definition of an orphan and refugee is made after the comparison between an immigrant and a refugee and used to create a parallel between these two identities. The idea of being an orphan can be so miserable, and society put in this idea that by being an orphan they are also considered an outcast. An identity this powerful can take over as the main identity. To get lost in this identity can make one feel like they do not belong. Tran uses the characteristics of an orphan to make the argument that orphans and refugees are similar to one another. By defining refugee this way, Tran sets the tone of how his experiences and memories of life before coming to the United States formed his own way of defining refugee. Instead of arguing that immigrants are like refugee, this comparison carries more sorrow and pain. Refugee lose their sense of self because they fall under so many categories, but never their own category. This is how one can lose their identity because society tends to group people together. Instead, Refugees look for ways to belong in this world because they feel as if they do not have a voice. Tran reclaims his title of refugee because he deserves his own category.

Refugees have a certain kind of protection that gives the unalienable rights. But the problem is who decides when someone is a refugee. Any person can they are an immigrants and that is reasonable, but when someone call themselves a refugee it is called into question. In many places around the world, “Governments normally guarantee the basic human rights and physical security of citizens. But when civilians become refugees this safety net disappears.” (UNHCR) Refugees then flee to seek safe asylum in a country where they will not be persecuted for just being themselves or for their ideological beliefs. The government in that country decides who is a refugee and who is not. Despite the challenges they face some refugees are not even

granted that titles, so they are forced to carry the title of immigrant. They are deprived of the rights that they should have because they do not fit the specifications. As time goes, people

confuse refugee and immigrants, in politics, in a historical context and in personal context.



Passports are used throughout the whole world, and this little book is main way people are able to travel to other countries outside of their own. Refugees do not have this same privilege that most people do. They are not granted passports the same way other people are able to. This type of distinction between how some are able to obtain passports can make seem as if the process for refugees is more difficult. Passports carry so much power in such a tiny book.

<Bs-md-ob-isabel-sainz-20180114-story.html>

In the link above, it leads to an obituary of a Cuban political refugee that shows the impact she had on people's lives. Isabel Sainz life was summarized in two pages. Being a refugee made an impact as to who she was and her identity. Her obituary title even used the word refugee. She carried that word to her death.



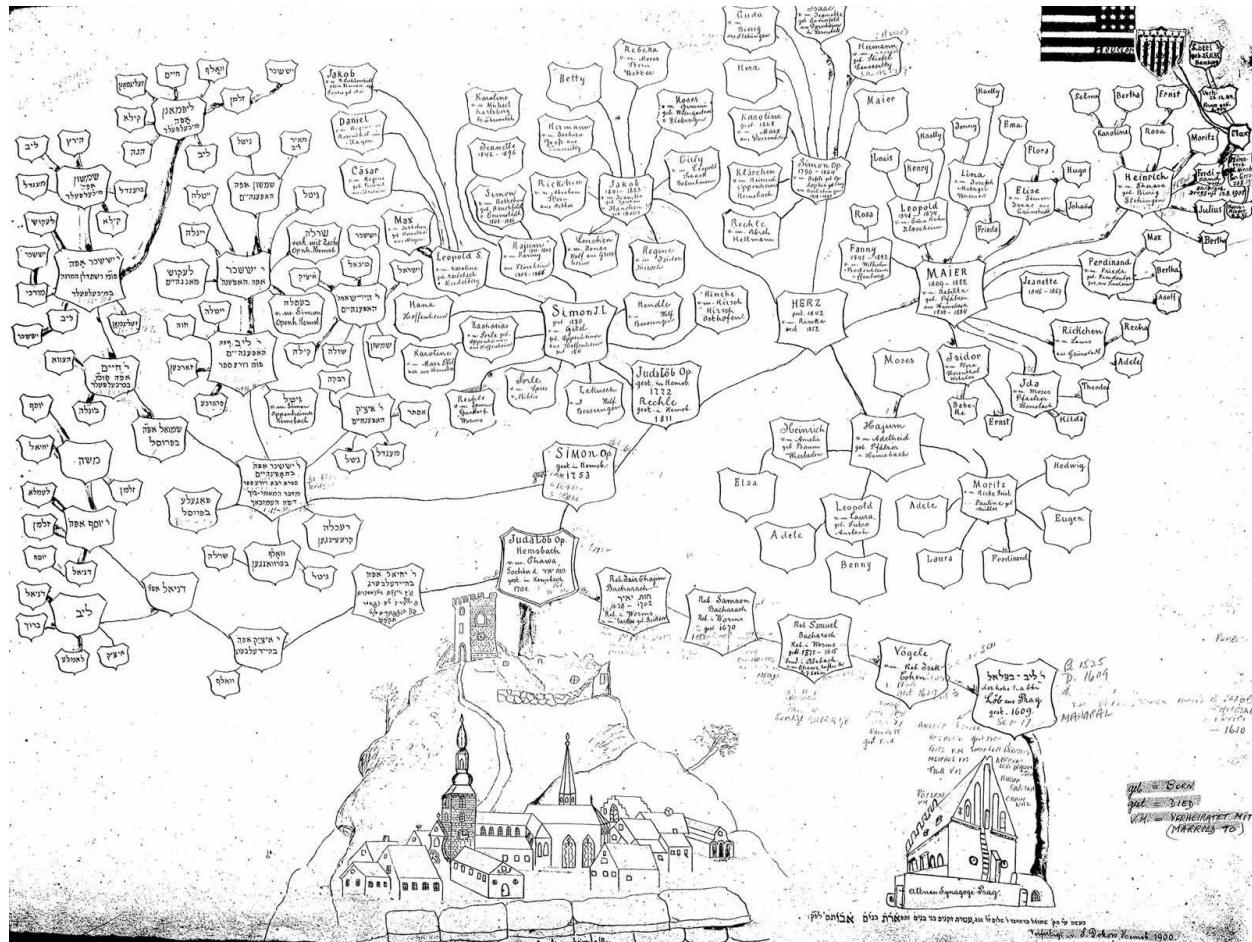
This diagram shows the process of getting U.S citizenship and how long it is. The process is lengthy and costly. The process can take years for many people. The length can seem quite discouraging to some people. By becoming a U.S citizen, a person has to sacrifice so much in order to gain this type of security in their new country.

I'm Nobody! Who are you?

Are you – Nobody – too?
Then there's a pair of us!
Don't tell! they'd advertise – you know!

How dreary – to be – Somebody!
How public – like a Frog –
To tell one's name – the livelong June –
To an admiring Bog!

The Poem above is by Emily Dickinson and is about the idea of identity. In the First line, She asks the question about how one see themselves. She makes the reader question if they are a nobody or if they actually are somebody, someone that has an identity. To be original is rare according to Emily Dickinson. She makes the argument that for someone to tell the work they are the same as another person, society will tear apart people's identity. They look at the part that makes a person unique and make it common, something that people can also take and make part of their own identity.



Growing up, children were often asked to make family trees to see where they come

from. Immigrant family trees are scattered throughout the paper. So many people are lost or left off because some immigrants no longer keep track of the family they left behind. Family trees also tell a story because they give insight to how a person got to where they are now. It is a part of their identity.

These two essays make the reader reflect on the time when they called someone and immigrants instead of refugee or vice versa. By arguing they are the same is incorrect because these two types of people do not fall in the same. The two texts overlap in the message of the meaning of refugee and how identity plays a role in our lives. They use different tactics to reach different

spans of readers to convey their message. While Immigrants and refugee can share experiences and the isolations from the society that assimilate into, they deserve to be given each their category. Refugee has rights and are protected under some governments, and they should not be denied of those rights. For the average person, they may not be able to tell when they see a refugee, but through these stories the can understand the experiences. For just that time that the reader takes in the words of both of the authors and put themselves in the shoes of a refugee.

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