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## In Diversity Push, Top Universities Enrolling More Black Immigrants

Critics Say Effort Favors Elite Foreigners, Leaves Out Americans

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The nation's most elite colleges and universities are bolstering their black student populations by enrolling large numbers of immigrants from Africa, the West Indies and Latin America, according to a study published recently in the American Journal of Education.

Immigrants, who make up 13 percent of the nation's college-age black population, account for more than a quarter of black students at Ivy League and other selective universities, according to the study, produced by Princeton University and the University of Pennsylvania.

The large representation of black immigrants developed as schools' focus shifted from restitution for decades of excluding black Americans from campuses to embracing wider diversity, the study's authors said. The more elite the school, the more black immigrants are enrolled.

"A lot of these institutions have been promoting the increase in their black populations, but clearly this increase reflects a growth in their black immigrant populations," said Camille Z. Charles, an associate professor of sociology at the University of Pennsylvania who co-authored the study.

Black American scholars such as Henry Louis Gates and Lani Guinier, two Harvard University professors, have said that white educators are skirting long-held missions to resolve historic wrongs against native black Americans by enrolling immigrants who look like them.

In an interview, Guinier said that the chasm has less to do with immigrants and more to do with admissions officers who rely on tests that wealthier students, including black immigrants, can afford to prepare for.

"In part, it has to do with coming from a country, especially those educated in Caribbean and African countries, where blacks were in the majority and did not experience the stigma that black children did in the United States," Guinier said. "The fathers of these students tend to be much better educated. This is not just true of immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean, this is true across the board. We have an admissions system that prefers wealth, that rewards wealth and calls it merit."

Officials at several top universities, including Harvard, the University of North Carolina and Princeton, did not respond to calls or e-mail messages seeking comment on the study.

The University of Pennsylvania's dean of admissions, Lee Stetson, said that although the university takes note of students' backgrounds, "we do not focus specifically on whether students are Caribbean American, African American or African. We do not involve ourselves with exact roots.

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"They bring diversity to the campus," Stetson said. "We try to find students from all walks of life, including African American students who have their roots in the southeastern United States."

The study relied on data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshmen, which included 1,028 black students, 281 of whom were immigrants. Black immigrants were defined as students who emigrated directly from Africa or the Caribbean, including countries such as Guyana that are on the South American continent and nations in the black diaspora or their American-born sons and daughters.

Stanford, Duke, Columbia, Vanderbilt and Harvard universities had the highest percentages of black students in their fall 2006 freshman classes, according to the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education. The percentage of black freshmen at elite colleges and universities ranged from a high of 12.3 percent at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to 1.4 percent at the California Institute of Technology.

The study's authors considered several possibilities to explain the large number of immigrant students. They noted that black immigrants tend to come from the uppermost classes of their native land and tend to be highly motivated to succeed. The authors also considered that black immigrants posted higher grades and test scores, and that admissions officers were impressed by their work ethic.

But the final theory, based on previous research by Nancy Foner and George M. Fredrickson, who co-wrote a 2004 study on immigration, ethnicity and race, was the most provocative.

"To white observers," they wrote, "black immigrants seem more polite, less hostile, more solicitous and 'easier to get along with.' Native blacks are perceived in precisely the opposite fashion."

On campus, native black Americans and immigrant students both embrace and wrestle with diversity. At the University of Georgia, native black American and African students met in the student union two years ago to discuss an emotional topic, "Where's the Africa in African American?" They were quiet at first, senior Oluwatoyin Mayaki recalled, but with some coaxing, the black American students spoke up.

"They were saying, 'I don't think it's fair that you get affirmative action like we do,' " said Mayaki, the American daughter of Nigerian parents. " 'This country was built on my parents' backs, not on your parents' backs. You didn't go through the years of slavery, discrimination or the civil rights movement.' "

Mayaki counts many black Americans as friends, but that was not always so. As a child, she was steered away from black Americans by her protective Yoruban mother, who emigrated from Nigeria in the 1980s.

"My mom wouldn't let me go next door for a sleepover with African American kids, but I could go five houses down to Asian houses. I kind of got along better with foreigners," she said. "You don't go to parties. You don't go to movies. You just study, stay at home, do your chores. My Indian and Asian friends got it. All my other friends, they never got it."

At Rutgers University in New Jersey, Ghanaian immigrant Abena Busia said that drawing distinctions between black Americans and Africans is divisive and dangerous.

"What disturbs me . . . is it immediately casts African Americans as unmotivated," she said. "It's like a good Negro, bad Negro syndrome and I reject it. It creates more problems than necessary. It's also a myth."

Busia grew up in Ghana's upper classes, was educated at Oxford University and received additional education in the United States. Regardless, she said, U.S. immigration laws were stacked against her and other ethnic immigrants.

"Look at me. Even with all my degrees, when I adopted my daughter in Ghana it took more than seven years to get her here," she said. "They lost my papers twice. I had my fingerprints taken three or four times. You

have to do this and . . . that. This country . . . has always been an inhospitable place for Africans to enter."

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