

NOT A NATION OF IMMIGRANTS

America is often referred to as a “land of immigrants”. Have you heard this?

And it’s true right? Haven’t many immigrants come to the US? Isn’t that what Layer the Walls is about? Well yes and no.

Yes, there are many immigrants and descendents of immigrants who are American citizens. And those stories and people are important.

But statements about the US being a land of immigrants do not tell the full story and erase people’s stories. This country includes many people who did not come here as immigrants and their stories are important too.

Let’s start with the definition of an immigrant: **An immigrant is someone who makes a conscious decision to leave their home and move to a foreign country with the intention of settling there.**

Can you think of any situations when someone might not fit that description?

- For hundreds of years African people were enslaved, kidnapped, and forcibly brought to this land. This was not a form of immigration.
 - When European colonizers arrived, Native people had been living here for thousands of years, they were not immigrants. When the United States enacted a forced migration of Native people from one region to another, this was not immigration.
 - Refugees are forced to flee their homes because of violence or persecution, often without notice. They are not considered immigrants and often can never safely return to their homeland, even for a visit.
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So, while the United States has been shaped by a rich history of immigration, there are many other narratives that need to be heard and honored so that we can more fully understand our past, present and future.

There is much more to learn about our complex history and ideas discussed above. Please keep discussing and learning more about these ideas.