

# What's Next: Immigration

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, you will consider the future of immigration with an eye toward the past. Immigration has been a central part of American history and there is little reason to think it will not continue to be an important part moving forward -- especially as the world becomes more interconnected by travel, communication, business, and, in general, technology. Specifically, this lesson will cover:

1. Immigration
2. Agile Leaders Throughout History
3. Planning for the Future

*"You've been here for so long, they say. It's not only that I'm still not a citizen, it's that I still don't know how many decades I have to wait."*

Puneet Chowdhary, immigrant



## BEFORE YOU START

How have visionary leaders throughout history used their agility skill?

## 1. Immigration

As you read earlier, immigration remains a divisive topic in the United States today. Many people recognize the value of having diverse communities and believe that the United States should make legal immigration easier. Many also feel it is morally and ethically correct to welcome immigrants to this country—particularly those who are fleeing violence, oppression, or extreme poverty.

Immigration laws often conflict with basic family values and concerns. Children born in the United States are American citizens, even if their parents are undocumented. Children brought to the United States illegally may, even after having been in the United States for decades, face deportation to a country they don't remember. Immigration laws that make paths to citizenship difficult often create stresses within families.

Others feel that the country has limited resources, services, and jobs, which need to be reserved for the citizens who are already here. Many also see immigration as contributing to potential security threats from drug trafficking, gang violence, or terrorism.

Immigrants make up about 13.5 percent of the U.S. population today and are an important part of the economy. Over 7 percent of immigrants are self-employed, which is higher than the national average of about

5 percent.<sup>6</sup> History shows that immigrant communities have been an important part of our nation's cultural, social, and economic fabric, both in the past and in the present. Undocumented immigrants tend to take jobs few American citizens are willing to take -- most notably labor-intensive, migrant farm work. Undocumented immigrants were also frontline workers during the height of the COVID-19 crisis.

## 2. Agile Leaders Throughout History


**Agility** is one of the main skills you've read about in this challenge. Immigrants throughout U.S. history have shown high levels of agility by moving to a new country in pursuit of freedom, safety, and economic security. Once they arrived, they had to adapt to new surroundings; often they had to learn new kinds of work or a new language. They used agility to become part of a new culture—while in many cases also managing to keep their own cultural traditions alive.

Immigrants have also had to use a considerable degree of **problem solving** to navigate the immigration process and their new lives in the United States. As you read in this challenge, limits on immigration made entering the country more difficult, particularly for immigrants who weren't from northern or western Europe. People hoping to come to the United States have had to use critical thinking and problem solving to decide what strategy or avenue they should take when beginning the immigration process. Once here, immigrants have needed problem solving during every step of setting up a new life.



### Agility: Skill in Action

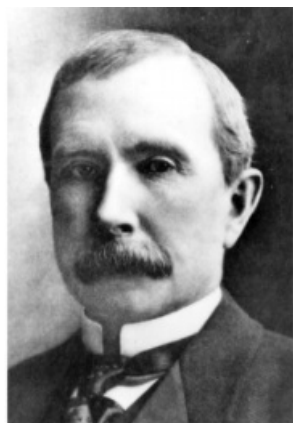
History is filled with leaders who faced difficult challenges in their lives and careers. How they responded determined the course of their future. In this challenge's *Infographic*, check out these examples of how visionary leaders throughout history used their agility skill to embrace new ideas and opportunities, adapt to change, overcome roadblocks, and not just survive, but thrive. Keep in mind: you can do the same in your life and career!

Leader		Description
	<p>Benjamin Banneker 1731-1806</p> <p>“Presumption should never make us neglect that which appears easy to us, nor despair make us lose courage at the sight of difficulties.”</p>	<p>Benjamin Banneker was a free African American living in Maryland, a slave state. Despite having limited opportunities for education, Banneker learned to read and began teaching himself a variety of topics, including astronomy and mathematics. Banneker's mental agility to grow his knowledge in new ways opened the door to many professional opportunities, and he went on to become a respected author, businessman, farmer, and even a land surveyor who helped lay out the perimeter for America's new capital, Washington D.C.</p>
	<p>Sarah Moore Grimké 1792-1873</p>	<p>Sarah Grimké was born into a wealthy, slave-owning</p>



"I am in search of truth; and no obstacle shall prevent my prosecuting that search, because I believe the welfare of the world will be materially advanced by every new discovery we make."

family in South Carolina. During a visit to Philadelphia, Grimké discovered beliefs about slavery that challenged what she'd previously known and prompted her to join the abolitionist movement. Grimké's ability to rethink her previous beliefs and fight for a new cause didn't end there. She continued using her agility to evolve her mindset and became a vocal advocate for women's rights.



John D. Rockefeller, Sr.  
1839-1937

"I always tried to turn every disaster into an opportunity."

John D. Rockefeller, an American businessman, owes much of his success to his ability to adapt to change and stay ahead of the competition. During the oil revolution, when others were spending money searching for new places to drill, Rockefeller was making money by refining oil into kerosene, which he could sell to light people's homes. This quickly turned Rockefeller into the largest producer of refined kerosene in the country. But, Rockefeller soon realized he couldn't transport his kerosene without paying hefty rail fees. So, he used his agility skill to pivot and invest in his own oil pipeline to end his dependence on the railroads!

Later, when the advent of household electricity reduced the need for kerosene, Rockefeller shifted gears once again and began refining oil into gasoline to power automobiles!



Madam C.J. Walker  
1867-1919

"...don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them!"

Sarah Breedlove, like many African American women of the time, was losing her hair in her 30s as a result of stress and damaging hair care products. While working as a laundress, she saw an opportunity in a niche market and used her agility to develop a line of hair care products as Madam C.J. Walker. She trained door-to-door saleswomen to demonstrate her products, growing her empire and helping thousands of African American women go into business for themselves.

As a child, Eleanor Roosevelt was shy and had few political aspirations. But in adulthood, as her husband's career grew, and she was exposed to new social and political ideas, Eleanor began to change the way she thought about her role and the world.

Eleanor Roosevelt

When Franklin Roosevelt was elected President, Eleanor quickly adapted to her new position to



1884-1962

“A stumbling block for the pessimist is stepping stone for the optimist.”

become one of the most influential (and agile!) First Ladies in history. She wrote six books and nearly 3,000 articles in newspapers and magazines and held weekly press conferences with female reporters to champion progressive issues like women’s rights and racial justice. Her agility didn’t stop there! Eleanor embraced the changing times and urged her husband to hire women in his cabinet, and she later worked on the Equal Pay Act that allows women today to receive the same pay as their male counterparts.



Cesar Chavez  
1927-1993

“Once social change begins, it cannot be reversed. We have seen the future, and the future is ours.”

Born in Arizona to immigrant parents, Cesar Chavez worked as an agricultural laborer, picking crops for low wages in unsafe conditions. Instead of accepting his circumstances, he decided to take a stand. He worked for the Community Service Organization, a Latino civil rights group. But when they wouldn’t endorse his plan to start a farmworkers union, he used his agility skill to envision a new opportunity — the National Farm Workers Association. Through nonviolent tactics like boycotts, pickets, and strikes, Chavez was persistent as he improved pay and working conditions for farmworkers throughout California.



Robert L. Johnson  
1946-

“Once you have a vision of your market, you can think of many ways to build your brand by diversifying around that core appeal.”

Working in the television industry at the dawn of cable, Robert L. Johnson saw an opportunity. There was a lack of television programming designed for African Americans. Something needed to change.

In 1980, Johnson took out a \$15,000 loan and launched BET, the first cable network targeting African American viewers. Johnson continued to demonstrate agility in the business world by evolving the company’s programming from music videos and sitcom reruns to original news, comedy, talk, and sports shows. In 2001, he sold the station to Viacom and became the first African American billionaire.



HINT

You can download this infographic as a PDF below to keep for yourself to discover why agility is an essential skill for leaders and evaluate situations where a lack of agility has contributed to failure.

[🔗 Infographic: Agile Leaders Throughout History](#)

## 2. Planning for the Future

As we look toward the future and consider what the United States will look like in the coming years, it is important to understand where we have come from. By examining primary sources, we begin to gain knowledge about the challenges immigrants have faced (and still face) when coming to the United States. We can consider the effects of past immigration laws or incarceration efforts as we assess new ways to engage with immigration. We can also explore the different skills immigrants have needed as they pursue a new life and new goals in this nation.



## SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **immigration** will continue into the future and remain a subject of debate in the U.S. You also reviewed a catalog of **agile leaders throughout history** who, like immigrants, used problem solving skills and an ability to adapt to succeed. Learning from these examples can help you as you **plan for the future**.

Best of luck in your learning!

Source: Strategic Education, Inc. 2020. Learn from the Past, Prepare for the Future.