**PUSH / PULL MIGRATION**

**Cuba**  
 Fidel Castro became dictator of Cuba in 1959 in the Cuban Revolution. Unlike the previous government, which had been friendly with the United States, Castro's Marxist regime alienated the American government and many Cubans. Thousands of landowners and professionals lost their property and businesses as the government transformed to a socialist economy. Nearly 700,000 Cubans migrated from the country between 1959 and 1980, with 85 percent of them settling in the United States. Many recent emigres are *balseros* -- people who escape from Cuba on rafts in the hope of surviving the 90-mile open-water trip to Florida.

**Dominican Republic**  
The Dominican Republic, which shares the island of Hispaniola with Haiti, has experienced three distinct waves of migration in the second half of the twentieth century. The first period began in 1961, when a coalition of high-ranking Dominicans, with assistance from the CIA, assassinated General Rafael Trujillo, the nation's military dictator. In the wake of his death, fear of retaliation by Trujillo's allies, and political uncertainty in general, spurred a great migration from the island. From 1966 to 1978, the exodus continued, fueled by high unemployment and political repression. Communities established by the first wave of immigrants to America created a network that assisted subsequent arrivals. Then, in the early 1980s, underemployment, inflation, and the rise in value of the dollar all contributed to a third wave of migration from the island nation. Today, emigration from the Dominican Republic remains high, facilitated by the social networks of now-established Dominican communities in the United States.

**El Salvador**  
This Central American nation has experienced decades of political and military tensions, capped off by an 11-year civil war that finally ended in 1992. As a result roughly a third of El Salvador's population emigrated in the 1980s and early '90s. The El Salvadoran migrants fell into one of two categories: refugees, who left El Salvador for another country because they felt endangered at home; and displaced persons, who had to leave their communities but remained within the national boundaries (also called "internal refugees"). Approximately one million refugees sought asylum in the United States; nearly half a million fled to the neighboring countries of Mexico, Honduras, and Nicaragua. Those in the United States have been sending money back to their families in El Salvador. These refugees are reluctant to return, as their families depend on them for financial support.

**Guatemala**  
More than half of Guatemala's population consists of indigenous people, descended from the Mayans. Spanish is the official language, but more than 23 languages are spoken there. Differences in customs, traditions, and religious beliefs have divided the people along many lines. In seeking to modernize the country and integrate the indigenous communities, the government has encountered opposition from various factions. The army has clashed with various guerilla groups at different times throughout the 1980s leading to many deaths. As the situation became less dangerous, many refugees would return, creating a migration pattern that ebbed and flowed with the perceived level of safety in their home country. In addition to military actions, natural disasters such as mud slides and Hurricane Mitch in 1998 have also affected the population's movement.

**Haiti**  
Migration has long been a part of Haiti's history. One of the least developed countries in the Western Hemisphere, a poor economy and political turmoil have led many to seek stability elsewhere. Migration within the Caribbean has always been common, especially as the sugar industry grew and workers were needed in Cuba, the Bahamas, and other nearby countries. But the United States has also been the primary recipient of Haitian immigrants. From 1957 to 1986, presidential dictators François and son Jean-Claude Duvalier maintained their power through violence and fear; the people referred to the secret police force as *Tonton Macoutes*, or "bogeymen."

**Mexico**  
Mexico's economic development in the twentieth century has not kept pace with its population growth, and many still live in poverty. Outdated agricultural technology and low wages motivated many Mexicans to leave their rural homes for urban centers, which quickly became overcrowded with people competing for scarce jobs. Others left the country searching for better opportunities, especially in the United States. Because of their shared border, the U.S. and Mexico share a heritage of movement between the two countries, both legal and illegal. Migrant labor from Mexico has long been important to the American economy, but changing immigration policy and the fluctuation of job availability has created an ebb and flow pattern, and is constantly redefining the relationship between the two nations. Economic crises in Mexico during the 1980s and 1990s, including national bankruptcy, harsh austerity measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund, a severely lowered standard of living, and the devaluation of the peso, caused major problems for the economic security of Mexicans. The topic of illegal immigrants continues to receive a great deal of attention in the United States today, even though most Mexicans enter the country legally, or claim citizenship through family reunification.