

# Dialogue: The Immigration Debate

**Paul:** Mom and Dad can be so **close-minded** when it comes to certain issues. **It drives me nuts.**

**Jennifer:** For instance...?

**Paul:** Well, immigration is the obvious one.

**Jennifer:** I guess that's a **touchy subject** for you since your girlfriend's from Guatemala.

**Paul:** True, but my position on the topic would be the same either way. **Hear me out** – the United States was built by immigrants. It seems so **hypocritical** to now all of a sudden decide we can pick and choose who we'll accept and who we'll **shut out.**

**Jennifer:** I think it's probably more complicated than that.

**Paul:** Seems pretty **clear-cut** to me. I mean – it's not easy to immigrate to a new country with a strange language and leave your family behind. People don't do it because they want to. They do it because they have to. **Case in point** – I know a guy who hasn't been able to return to his homeland in thirty years. He hasn't seen his parents in all that time, because if he ever goes home, he's not sure he can come back to the U.S. And since he just can't **make a living** at home, he stays here.

## Vocabulary

**close-minded** = not tolerant of other beliefs; not willing to consider other views

**it drives me nuts** = it really annoys me

**for instance** = for example

**a touchy subject** = a sensitive / delicate topic

**Hear me out** = Listen to everything I have to say on this point

**hypocritical** = having a contradiction in beliefs and actions

**shut out** = exclude, not permit to enter

**clear-cut** = clear and obvious

**Case in point** = the following example demonstrates my point perfectly

**make a living** = earn enough money to survive

**Jennifer:** Wow. If he was willing to make such sacrifices, it must be near impossible to make a decent living in his country.

**Paul:** Exactly. We shouldn't be such a **heartless** nation that we refuse to let people in, and force them to hide by living illegally. We should **welcome immigrants with open arms**. There's **more than enough** room for everyone.

**Jennifer:** Well... from what I've heard, there have been some complications with the **surge** of immigration in recent years. If **unchecked**, it would make the country **go downhill** pretty fast.

**Paul:** Hmm... that's probably **scaremongering** by conservatives in order to support their points... but what have you heard?

**Jennifer:** Basically, a large influx of immigrants can lead to a rise in poverty, an increase in crime and more crowding in the cities. **Not to mention** the **strain** on the public systems, since illegal immigrants don't pay taxes. Doesn't it make sense to you that at some point we just can't accommodate everybody?

**Paul:** Yeah, but I think that those disaster scenarios are so far off we shouldn't take them seriously – at least, not right now. The obvious solution is to make it easier to immigrate legally. People always complain that immigrants don't pay taxes, right? There's a simple fix to that – make them legal! Immigrants would be happy to pay taxes. It'd be a **small price to pay** in order to live without fear of

## Vocabulary

**heartless** = cruel, without compassion

**welcome with open arms** = welcome enthusiastically

**more than enough** = lots of extra, much more than the minimum amount

**surge** = big increase

**unchecked** = not stopped or reduced

**go downhill** = get worse

**scaremongering** = spreading very frightening rumors

**not to mention** = in addition; plus

**strain** = dangerous increased pressure

**a small price to pay** = a relatively small sacrifice to make, when compared with the great benefits received

getting deported, and the country would have increased revenue. Seems like a **win-win** to me.

**Jennifer:** Sounds like you've solved all the country's problems. Maybe you should **run for president**.

**Paul:** Hey, **you never know!**

## Vocabulary

**win-win** = a situation that's good for both sides

**run for president** = try to be elected president

**you never know!** = it could be a possibility; it's not impossible

## **Comprehension Questions**

- 1. What is Paul's view on immigration?**
  - a. He is in favor of it
  - b. He is against it
  - c. He is neutral
  
- 2. Jennifer insinuates that Paul's beliefs are affected by his...**
  - a. parents
  - b. social status
  - c. romantic relationship
  
- 3. Paul's friend...**
  - a. hasn't been back to his country in thirty years
  - b. tried unsuccessfully to get into the U.S. for thirty years
  - c. was deported after thirty years in the U.S.
  
- 4. Which of these is NOT mentioned as a negative point to immigration?**
  - a. Increased crime
  - b. Overcrowding in cities
  - c. Fewer jobs for citizens
  
- 5. What is the solution proposed for the tax issue?**
  - a. Reduce the number of public services
  - b. Increase taxes on native-born citizens
  - c. Make illegal immigrants legal

## Vocabulary Quiz

Complete the sentences with these words:

clear-cut

close-minded

driving me nuts

going downhill

heartless

make a living

more than enough

strain

surge

touchy subject

1. Be careful with that box - it's pretty heavy, and you don't want to \_\_\_\_\_ your back.
2. He got a \_\_\_\_\_ of fan mail after one of his songs was featured in a popular TV show.
3. It's a complex problem, so there's no \_\_\_\_\_ solution.
4. My boss never listens to suggestions. He's pretty \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Please stop tapping your foot - it's \_\_\_\_\_!
6. Religion can be a \_\_\_\_\_, so it's probably better not to discuss it on a first date.
7. She dropped out of business school and is now trying to \_\_\_\_\_ from her art.
8. The parents were arrested for torturing their child. How could they be so \_\_\_\_\_?!
9. Their relationship is \_\_\_\_\_ - I think they're headed for a breakup.
10. We don't need to buy any more food for the party; we already have \_\_\_\_\_.

## Listening Practice

*Listen to the conversation again and fill in the missing words.*

**Paul:** Mom and Dad can be so close-minded when it comes to certain \_\_\_\_\_ . It drives me nuts.

**Jennifer:** For instance...?

**Paul:** Well, immigration is the \_\_\_\_\_ one.

**Jennifer:** I guess that's a touchy subject for you since your girlfriend's from Guatemala.

**Paul:** True, but my position on the topic would be the same either way. Hear me out – the United States was \_\_\_\_\_ by immigrants. It seems so hypocritical to now all of a sudden decide we can pick and choose who we'll \_\_\_\_\_ and who we'll shut out.

**Jennifer:** I think it's probably more complicated than that.

**Paul:** Seems pretty clear-cut to me. I mean – it's not easy to immigrate to a new country with a \_\_\_\_\_ language and leave your family behind. People don't do it because they want to. They do it because they have to. Case in point – I know a guy who hasn't been able to return to his homeland in \_\_\_\_\_ years. He hasn't seen his parents in all that

time, because if he ever goes home, he's not sure he can come back to the U.S. And since he just can't make a living at home, he stays here.

**Jennifer:** Wow. If he was \_\_\_\_\_ to make such sacrifices, it must be near impossible to make a decent living in his country.

**Paul:** Exactly. We shouldn't be such a heartless nation that we \_\_\_\_\_ to let people in, and force them to hide by living illegally. We should welcome immigrants with open arms. There's more than enough \_\_\_\_\_ for everyone.

**Jennifer:** Well... from what I've heard, there have been some \_\_\_\_\_ with the surge of immigration in recent years. If unchecked, it would make the country go downhill pretty fast.

**Paul:** Hmm... that's probably scaremongering by conservatives in order to support their \_\_\_\_\_ ... but what have you heard?

**Jennifer:** Basically, a large influx of immigrants can lead to a rise in \_\_\_\_\_, an increase in crime and more crowding in the cities. Not to mention the strain on the \_\_\_\_\_ systems, since illegal immigrants don't pay taxes. Doesn't it make sense to you that at some point we just can't \_\_\_\_\_ everybody?

**Paul:** Yeah, but I think that those \_\_\_\_\_ scenarios are so far off we shouldn't take them seriously – at least, not right now. The obvious solution is to make it easier to immigrate legally. People always

\_\_\_\_\_ that immigrants don't pay taxes, right? There's a simple fix to that - make them legal! Immigrants would be happy to pay taxes. It'd be a small price to pay in order to live without \_\_\_\_\_ of getting deported, and the country would have increased revenue. Seems like a win-win to me.

**Jennifer:** Sounds like you've solved all the country's problems.

\_\_\_\_\_ you should run for president.

**Paul:** Hey, you never know!

## **Speaking Task**

Imagine that Paul and Jennifer then turned to you and asked, "So, what do you think about all this?" Explain your point of view on immigration, giving the reasons for your opinions.

Record your 1-3 minute answer at [www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish](http://www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish) - or, if you prefer, you can e-mail me the MP3 to [shayna@espressoenglish.net](mailto:shayna@espressoenglish.net) for feedback on your spoken English.

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## **Answers**

### **Comprehension Questions**

1. a
2. c
3. a
4. c
5. c

### **Vocabulary Quiz**

1. strain
2. surge
3. clear-cut
4. close-minded
5. driving me nuts
6. touchy subject
7. make a living
8. heartless
9. going downhill
10. more than enough