Teaching history from
DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

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Asian American Voices for Education

8th Grade Lesson Plan on
Changing Faces, Structural Realities: The 1965 Act and Georgia's Modern Population

Georgia Social Studies Standards

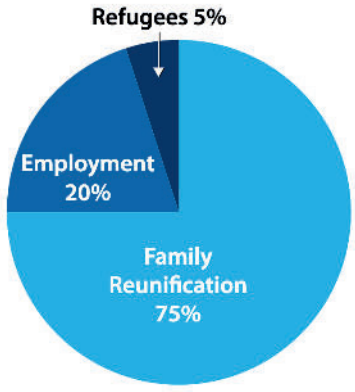
SS8H12 Explain the importance of developments in Georgia since the late 20th century. (Specifically focusing on how post-1965 immigration transformed Georgia's modern cultural landscape, demographic shift, and economic development).

Background Information

To understand **modern Georgia**, students must examine the major demographic shift caused by the **Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965**, also known as the **Hart-Celler Act**. For much of Georgia's history, the state's racial identity was shaped primarily by a Black-and-White racial binary. Anti-Asian immigration policies, including the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the Asiatic Barred Zone Act of 1917, and the Johnson-Reed Act of 1924, intentionally restricted Asian immigration and kept the Asian American population in the American South extremely small.



Pie Chart of the Hart-Celler Act (1965), which set a 20,000-person cap per country.



The 1965 Act abolished national origin quotas that had limited immigration from Asia and other regions. Although President Lyndon B. Johnson assured the public that the law was "not a revolutionary bill" and would not "reshape the structure of our daily lives," it transformed the nation's demographics. The law prioritized family reunification while also creating opportunities for immigrants with specialized skills. During the Cold War, the United States used these professional preferences to attract highly educated workers, including scientists, engineers, and doctors, from Asian countries to strengthen the nation's global competitiveness.



These immigration patterns contributed to the creation of the **"model minority"** stereotype—the inaccurate belief that all Asian Americans are universally successful, wealthy, and high-achieving. In reality, Asian American communities include people with widely different experiences. Many highly skilled immigrants arrived through employment-based pathways with financial resources and educational opportunities, while Asian refugees fleeing war and political instability entered through limited programs with fewer resources and support systems. The stereotype also has been used historically to minimize systemic racism and create divisions among communities of color by suggesting that success depends only on individual effort rather than social and economic structures.



In **Georgia,** these national immigration changes combined with the state's late-20th-century economic growth. As Georgia developed into a hub for international business, technology, healthcare, and education—especially in metro Atlanta—it attracted many Asian immigrants and their families. Over the decades, Georgia's Asian American population grew rapidly, becoming one of the state's fastest-growing communities.

This demographic transformation reshaped Georgia's economy, culture, politics, and communities. Understanding this history helps students recognize how federal policies, global events, and local economic changes have shaped the diverse Georgia of today.

Complete Article and Lesson Plan

Photo Credit:
(Top to Bottom, Left to Right)

1. Yoichi Okamoto, Lyndon B. Johnson signs the 1965 Immigration And Nationality Act on Liberty Island, NY. Public Domain via LBJ Presidential Library
2. Kim, Esther June and Anna Falkner. "Handouts: Not Your Model Minority: An Inquiry on the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965" in Social Studies and the Young Learner (Jan/Feb 2022)
3. "Those Asian-American Whiz Kids," in Time Magazine 130, no. 9 (August 31, 1987).

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History is the context of "**now**", "**why**", and "**how**".

Teach interwoven history.



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