

FAMOUS IMMIGRANTS TO USA

Neil Young, Singer, 1945 –

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The famous Canadian American folk and rock 'n roll singer-songwriter, Neil Young spent four years undocumented early in his career. He was a key member of Crosby, Stills, Nash and Young, playing with the band at the famous Woodstock Festival. Young is known for experimenting with different styles and genres. His decades of touring and more than 50 albums have added up to a storied career. In 1995, Young was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame. He has won two Grammys and been nominated for 28 of them.

Franklin Chang-Diaz, Astronaut / Entrepreneur, 1950 –

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As the child of a poor Costa Rican-Chinese family, Franklin Chang-Diaz looked up at the stars and knew he wanted to join his hero Buzz Aldrin among them. His path to becoming the first Latinx immigrant and first naturalized citizen astronaut at NASA required staying with extended family in Connecticut to complete high school, learning English very quickly, wrangling scholarships to attend college and successfully competing for an elite PhD program in applied plasma physics at MIT.

In 1980, Chang-Diaz's hard work came to fruition when NASA selected him to train as an astronaut. Over the next 25 years, he flew seven missions on the Space Shuttle, which included almost 20 hours of spacewalks, and ran the Advanced Space Propulsion Laboratory at the Johnson Space Center from 1993 to 2005. Not content to rest on his already extraordinary achievements, Chang-Diaz founded Ad Astra Rocket Company after retiring from NASA. The company is a leader in the field of plasma rocket propulsion technology and has partnered with NASA to advance space exploration. In recognition of his incredible work, his childhood hero Buzz Aldrin personally presented him with the "Buzz Aldrin Quadrennial Space Award" in 2014.

Charlize Theron, Actress, 1975 –

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Today, Charlize Theron is best known for her critically acclaimed, Oscar-winning Hollywood performances, but her career almost ended when she was deported at age 19. Theron came to the U.S. from South Africa as a teen to pursue a career in performing arts. Just as she was cast in her first major motion picture, *The Devil's Advocate*, she was deported for overstaying her work visa. Theron had the rare opportunity to regain authorization and return to the United States to live and build an exceptional career. In 2007 she became a U.S. citizen. In 2016, *Time* named her one of the *Time* 100 most influential people in the world. Theron has also ventured into film production with her company Denver and Delilah Productions

Trevor Noah, Comedian / TV Show Host, 1984 –

Trevor Noah is now one of the most successful late-night hosts and stand-up comics in the world, but few would have predicted his current success based on his beginnings. Noah was born to a white father and Black, Xhosa mother, which was a crime in Apartheid South Africa. After a childhood marked with poverty and abuse from his stepfather, Noah's fortunes turned when he tried stand-up for the first time.

Most Americans first discovered Noah when he took over for comedian Jon Stewart as the host of the late night show *The Daily Show*, a move that required the already-accomplished comedian to take a pay cut. He brought a fresh, young, international perspective to the immensely popular program. His outspoken views on gun violence, race and current events transformed the show and brought in a new audience. On top of hosting a daily TV show, Noah has continued to tour internationally to sold-out audiences.

Noah's memoir *Born a Crime* about his upbringing in South Africa reached the top of *The New York Times* bestseller list. In 2018, he founded the Trevor Noah Foundation to improve educational opportunities for South African young people, saying, "We all deserve to achieve our fullest potential no matter where we come from."

Jose Antonio Vargas, Journalist / Activist, 1981 –

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At 30 years old, Jose Antonio Vargas had what appeared to be an enviably successful life. After coming to the U.S. from the Philippines to live with his grandparents at age 12, he earned a full scholarship to college and took a series of prestigious journalism jobs that netted him a Pulitzer Prize among other accolades. Vargas risked it all when he wrote *The New York Times* article *My Life as an Undocumented Immigrant*, which detailed how he navigated life since discovering he was undocumented as a teen.

Iman, Supermodel / Entrepreneur / Philanthropist, 1965 –

Iman, born Zara Mohamed Abdulmajid, has always insisted that her looks are merely "typical Somali," but there is nothing typical about what she's done with them. While she was attending college in Kenya, a photographer encouraged her to pursue modeling. She took a risk and moved to the United States. Eventually her face would be known worldwide.

Iman used her success to advocate for pay equality for herself and other Black models. Inspired by her own struggles to find makeup that suited her skin tone, she launched Iman Cosmetics with the tagline "Makeup for Women of Color." Iman has two children of her own, and her philanthropic work has mostly centered on children. As CARE's first global ambassador, she campaigned to end poverty. She has also worked with the Keep a Child Alive program, the Children's Defense Fund and Save the Children.

Oscar de la Renta, Fashion Designer, 1932 – 2014

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Iconic Dominican American designer Oscar de la Renta moved to the U.S. and rose quickly through the ranks. By the time he was 40, fashion enthusiasts were referring to him as the "Grandfather of Fashion." De la Renta's brand was known for elegant and romantic looks, an

aesthetic he connected to his Latin American background. Over the course of his career, he dressed five First Ladies and countless stars like Nicole Kidman and Cindy Crawford. He was quick to turn his professional success into philanthropic ventures. The orphanage he founded in the Dominican Republic still serves hundreds of children yearly. He also extensively supported arts organizations in the United States. His work has been recognized with two Coty awards, known as the “Oscars of fashion,” a Carnegie Hall Medal of Excellence, and a series of stamps issued by the U.S. Postal Service that celebrated his designs.

Hedy Lamarr, Actress / Inventor, 1914 – 2000

Are you using your Wi-Fi or Bluetooth to read this story? You might have Hedy Lamarr to thank. She is best known for her high-profile career as an actress in the Golden Age of Hollywood, but her engineering accomplishments, which led to the development of such technologies, are arguably her greatest legacy.

Lamarr was born in Austria to a wealthy, Jewish family. In 1937, she moved to London, fleeing both an abusive husband and the advance of Nazism. There she met Louis B. Mayer, the co-founder of MGM who offered her an acting contract in Hollywood.

Lamarr’s film career took off quickly, with magazines heralding her as “the most beautiful woman in the world.”

Privately, Lamarr nurtured her passion for inventing despite her lack of formal education. She even volunteered to join the National Inventors Council during WWII, but she was directed to campaign for war bonds instead. After hearing about radio-controlled torpedoes being jammed, Lamarr and her friend George Antheil co-developed and patented a “secret communication system” for “frequency hopping” to prevent the enemy from blocking radio waves. The military never used her idea as she intended, but the concept she invented was fundamental to the development of technologies like Bluetooth and Wi-Fi. During her life, Lamarr was mostly known for her film roles but in 2014 she was posthumously given the recognition she deserved for her intellect when she was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame. As Lamarr once said, “The brains of people are more interesting than the looks, I think.”

Chien-Shiung Wu, Physicist, 1912 – 1997

Chien-Shiung Wu was christened the “First Lady of Physics” for her extraordinary accomplishments in the field, which included work on the atom bomb and a discovery that many think should have garnered her a Nobel Prize.

After immigrating from China, Wu attended Berkeley University, where she obtained a PhD in physics. Despite the sexism and anti-Asian prejudice of the World War II era, she was so productive in the field that she was recruited for the Manhattan Project. Her research proved key in the United States’ successful effort to create an atomic bomb. Wu is best known for her experiment proving that during beta decay the “law of conservation of parity” does not apply, a significant development in the study of atoms. Her work was controversially passed over for a Nobel Prize, though others who worked on the project were recognized. Some believe that this was because of her gender. Over the course of her career, Wu became the first female president of the American Physical Society, the first female winner of the Wolf Prize in Physics and first female recipient of an honorary degree from Princeton University.

She capitalized on her success to call for better treatment of women in science, famously asking an MIT symposium, “whether the tiny atoms and nuclei or the mathematical symbols or the DNA molecules have any preference for either masculine or feminine treatment.”

