

shoemaker and cigar maker in London. Upon his arrival in the United States, he rose quickly through the ranks of union leadership and became an American citizen in 1872. His decision to immigrate was based on a desire for higher wages and freedom from European anti-Semitism, as he had been born a Jew. In 1881, he cofounded what became the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and, except for one year, served as president until his death. He rose to the rank of first vice president of the Cigar Makers' International Union in 1896.

Gompers displayed his British cultural origin by repudiating the class hatred that plagued continental unions. The beliefs he had embraced in England—for example, that union policy should be practical and nationalistic—served him well in the United States. By accepting only skilled labor, he guaranteed substantial bargaining clout. However, he strongly supported immigration restrictions because he felt that immigrants bided down the price of labor, a view many saw as hypocritical. Also, his policies were of little use to unskilled laborers, who were excluded from the AFL.

Thomas W. Buchanan

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SEE ALSO: British immigrants; Davis, James John; Industrial Workers of the World; Jewish immigrants; Labor unions.

GONZÁLEZ CASE

THE EVENT: Asylum petition and legal custody battle of a young boy who dramatically escaped drowning during his mother's attempt to reach the United States on a small boat ignited a political feud

DATE: November 25, 1999–June 28, 2000

SIGNIFICANCE: What may have been the world's most closely watched custody battle became a cause célèbre that reached the U.S. Supreme Court, strained U.S.-Cuba relations, and had future political repercussions.

On Thanksgiving Day in 1999, a five-year-old Cuban boy named Elián González was found clinging to a rubber inner tube floating off the coast of South Florida. Five days earlier, the boy had left Cárdenas, Cuba, on a seventeen-foot boat with his mother and twelve others hoping to reach the United States. When the vessel sank during a storm, Elián and a young couple were the only survivors.

After the U.S. Coast Guard turned Elián over to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), INS agents paroled Elián to the family of his great-uncle Lázaro González, who were living in Miami's Little Havana district. Meanwhile, Cuban president Fidel Castro charged that the boy had been "kidnaped" and demanded that he be returned to his father in Cárdenas. Castro threatened that if Elián were not returned to Cuba within seventy-two hours, he would cancel the U.S.-Cuba negotiations on migration that were scheduled to be held in Havana. Massive Cuban protest rallies were staged daily in front of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana.

U.S. President Bill Clinton's administration rejected Castro's ultimatum and declared that a Florida family court would rule on Elián's custody. However, that plan was reversed on December 9, when Deputy U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder stated that Elián's fate would be settled by the INS itself. The U.S.-Cuba migration talks were then held on December 13, as originally scheduled.

Six days afterward, the U.S. government ended a six-day hostage standoff in a Louisiana jail by secretly negotiating with Cuba to settle the deportation demands of six criminals who had arrived in Florida during the 1980 Mariel boatlift. The return of Elián was speculated to be part of the deal. Two weeks later, INS commissioner Doris Meissner rejected a political asylum petition filed on Elián's behalf and Attorney General Janet Reno upheld the right of Elián's father to have custody. The great-uncle of Elián who had received temporary custody of Elián in state court then challenged the INS ruling in federal court.

On April 12, 2000, Reno ordered the Florida relatives to surrender Elián. The family defied her and obtained an injunction keeping the boy in America. Ten days later, Reno authorized a pre-dawn raid by 151 heavily armed federal agents who battered in the door of Elián's relatives' home and seized him. The boy was then reunited in Washing-



Havana taxi passing a public poster calling for Elián González's return to his homeland in early 2000. (AP/Wide World Photos)

ton, D.C., with his father, who had arrived in the capital city two weeks earlier.

On June 1, the Eleventh U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the INS had acted properly in denying Elián asylum but ordered that the boy remain in the United States pending the appeal of his great-uncle's case. Three weeks later, the court reaffirmed its decision, which was challenged by the Miami family in the U.S. Supreme Court on June 26. Two days later, the Court declined to intervene, and Elián and his father immediately returned home to a hero's welcome in Cuba.

The Clinton administration's handling of the González case greatly angered the large and strongly anti-Castro Cuban American community in Florida. When Clinton's vice president, Al Gore, ran for president in November, 2000, Florida's Cuban Americans voted heavily against him. Their votes may have cost Gore the presidency. He lost narrowly, and the election hinged on Florida. Two

years later, Reno ran for governor of Florida and lost in the primary.

In 2003, Elián's father, whom Castro had decorated as a national hero, won a seat in Cuba's National Assembly after running unopposed. Elián frequently appeared at political rallies with Castro, whom he called a friend and "father." A museum was dedicated to Elián in his hometown and he is portrayed on a statue in front of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana. In 2008, Elián joined Cuba's Young Communist Union.

Antonio Rafael de la Cova

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SEE ALSO: Cuban immigrants; Due process protections; Families; Florida; Immigration and Naturalization Service, U.S.; Little Havana; Mariel boat-lift; Miami; Presidential elections; Supreme Court, U.S.; Washington, D.C.

GOSPEL SOCIETY

IDENTIFICATION: Christian-based support organization for Japanese immigrants

DATE: 1877-1906

LOCATION: San Francisco, California

ALSO KNOWN AS: Fukuinkai

SIGNIFICANCE: Founded in San Francisco by Japanese Christian students, the Gospel Society was the first immigrant association established by Japanese in the United States. The organization played an integral part in helping many new Japanese immigrants adjust to life in America while pursuing their studies. It was also instrumental in shaping the development of Japanese Protestant Christianity.

At the end of the nineteenth century, many Japanese immigrants arrived in the San Francisco area after being told that it was possible to work and study in the area. The Gospel Society was formed by recent converts to Methodism and Congregationalism to assist these often penniless students. The first meeting place was an austere, windowless room in the basement of the Chinese Methodist Episcopal Mission in the city's Chinatown. Every Saturday night, thirty-five members assembled for Bible study and debate. For a fee of thirty-five cents per month, the society provided community support, room and board, and help with job searching. Over the years, a variety of splinter groups emerged, including a group that formed the First Japanese Presbyterian Church of San Francisco. In 1886, the group moved out of the Chinese Mission basement with the newly established Japanese Methodist Episcopal Mission. Despite the success of the Japanese Mission, the Gospel Society remained an

autonomous student residence until the great San Francisco earthquake of 1906.

Joy M. Gambill

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SEE ALSO: California; Issei; Japanese American Citizens League; Japanese immigrants; Missionaries; Religions of immigrants; San Francisco.

GRAHAM V. RICHARDSON

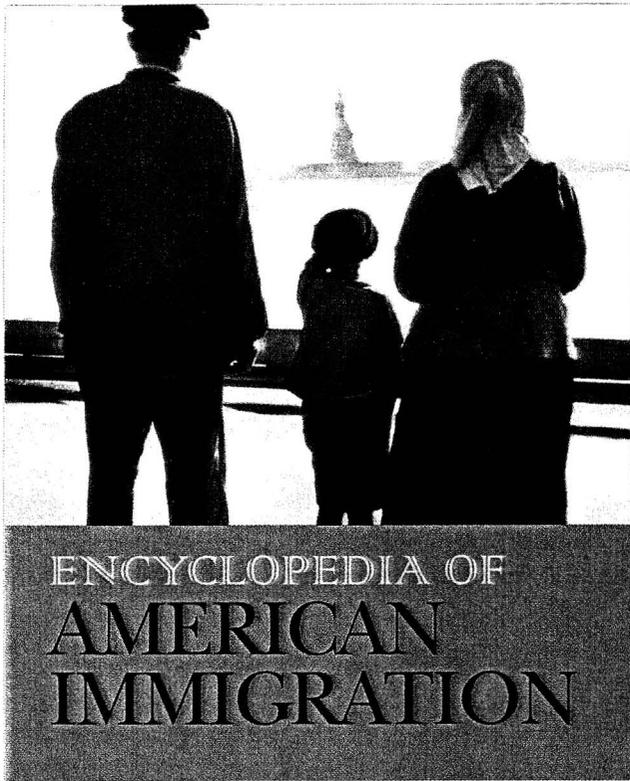
THE CASE: U.S. Supreme Court decision on rights of resident noncitizens

DATE: Decided on June 14, 1971

SIGNIFICANCE: The *Richardson* decision was the first in a series of rulings that struck down discriminatory state laws denying public benefits to noncitizens.

Carmen Richardson, a legally admitted resident alien, had been living in Arizona since 1956. When she became totally disabled in 1964, she applied for welfare benefits that were administered by the state with federal subsidy. Her application was denied because of an Arizona statute requiring a person either to be a citizen or to have resided in the country for fifteen years. After the district court decided in Richardson's favor, the state's commissioner of public welfare, John Graham, appealed the case to the Supreme Court. Until that time, the Court had usually upheld laws that discriminated against noncitizens.

The Supreme Court unanimously ruled that the Arizona law was unconstitutional and that Richardson was entitled to benefits. Writing the opinion for the Court, Justice Harry A. Blackmun made four major points. First, from the perspective of equal protection, alienage, like race, is a suspect classification, because aliens are a discrete and po-



Encyclopedia of American Immigration

Edited by Carl L. Bankston III, Tulane University

The set covers the full breadth of American immigration history in 533 alphabetically arranged and easy-to-understand articles.

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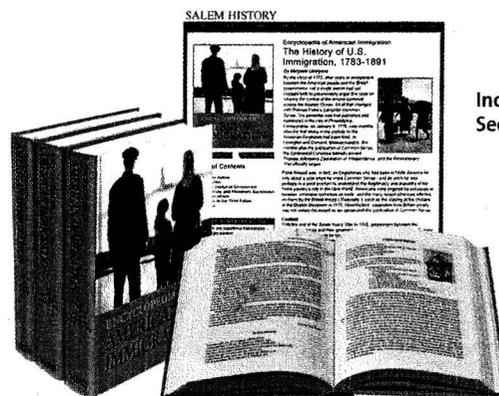
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