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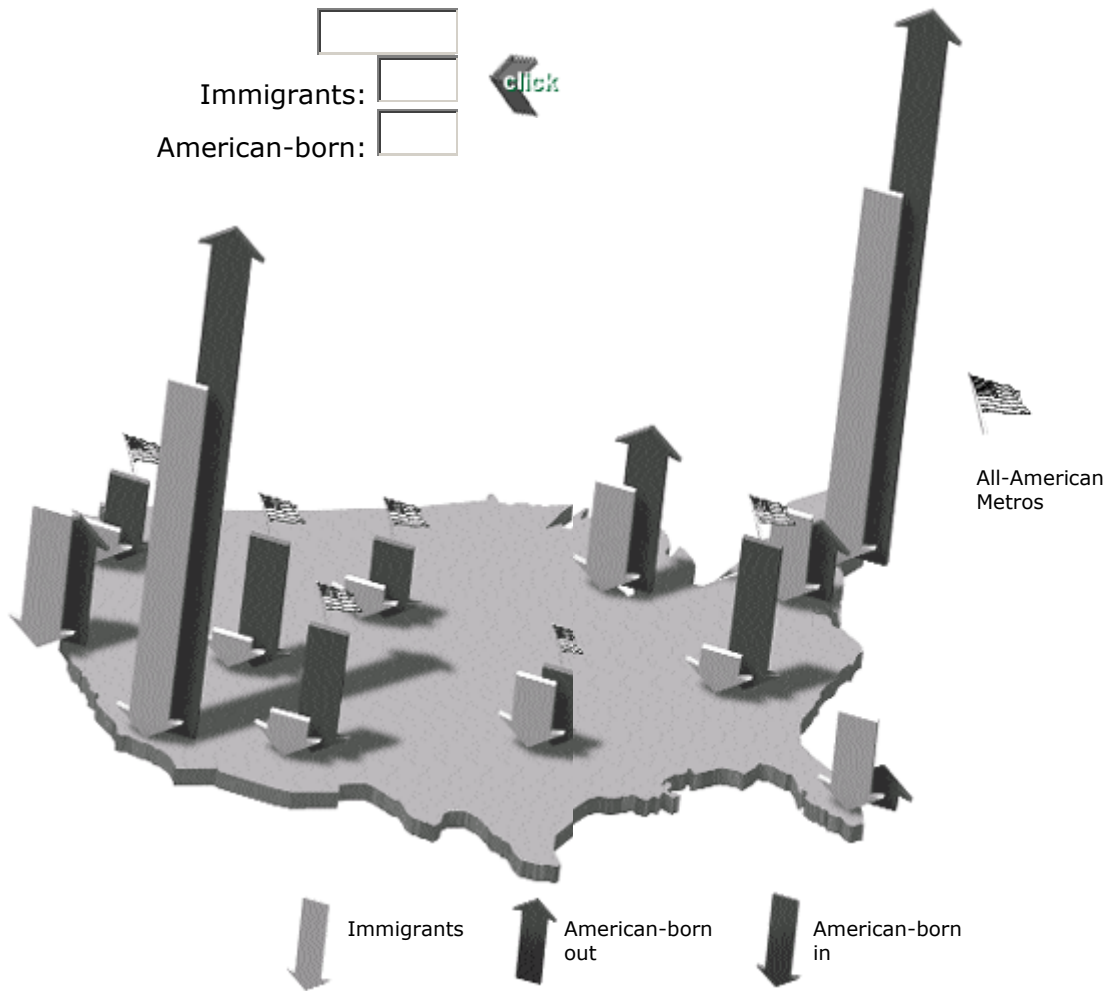
Remember the "melting pot?" Or did you go to school when "mosaic" had become the optimistic metaphor for the way the newly arrived found their geographic and social niches in a nation built by wave after wave of immigrants.

BY BILL FREY

The immigration numbers for the past few decades tell a very different story — one harder to define by metaphor. About two-thirds of the immigrants arriving in the last 15 years are now clustered in metropolitan areas that are home to just one-quarter of the native-born Americans. Meanwhile, a dozen other rapidly growing cities have become magnets of opportunity for domestic migrants, creating increasingly concentrated pockets of the older, English-as-a-first-language white and black middle-class.

This new demographic divide may, in the end, be as significant as the existing economic and cultural chasms between white and black, rural and urban, rich and poor. On the one hand, a handful of cities are fast becoming multi-ethnic caldrons — showcases for the best and worst aspects of globalism. On the other, footloose, native-born Americans in search of better jobs and housing are creating more homogeneous metro sprawls.

Still looking for a no-muss, no-fuss label? Call it Balkanization, American-style.



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