During the Age of Mass Migration (1850-1913), the US maintained an open border, absorbing 30 million European immigrants. Prior cross-sectional work finds that immigrants initially held lower-paid occupations than natives but converged over time. In newly-assembled panel data, we show that, in fact, the average immigrant did not face a substantial occupation-based earnings penalty upon first arrival and experienced occupational advancement at the same rate as natives. Cross-sectional patterns are driven by biases from declining arrival cohort quality and departures of negatively-selected return migrants. We show that assimilation patterns vary substantially across sending countries and persist in the second generation.

Ran Abramitzky is an Associate Professor (with tenure) in Stanford’s Department of Economics, a Research Associate at the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), and a Faculty Fellow at the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research (SIEPR). He earned his PhD at Northwestern University. He sits on the Editorial Board of the *Journal of Economic History* and has won the Dean’s Award for Distinguished Teaching at Stanford, the Economics Distinguished Faculty Teaching Award, and a 2012 Sloan Research Fellow.