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If we found another planet that could support human life, but there was only room for 200 spaces on the ship, who should we take?



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Young Minds Essay Winner

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When looking at this question there are countless questions and factors that need to be considered. Ethics, equality and sustained life in a colony of just 200 has many points that need to be made. I'm going to begin by discussing the inquiry on nationality of the chosen few. Besides nationality I will also include sections on the 5 human necessities, ratios of gender and age etc., occupation and careers

As mentioned by the question, there are an estimated 7.9 billion people on the planet. There are 195 (or 197, depending on what source you go by). To divide evenly by pure countries would not only leave remainders but inaccurately represent the world. On the other hand, 200 is almost one 40 millionth of the total population. If we were to go by real time statistics, many countries would be left out with their smaller populations. Fractions to the millionths would be more than difficult to divide fairly. In fact, just 36 countries would qualify for at least one 'whole person', the others would be split. A solution that is used for many things could be pure luck, or for better way of description, random picking. Then again, this could result in disparities of certain ethnicities, nationalities or complete exclusion. After a lot of consideration on my part, I concluded it should be a mix between these methods. Those countries who qualified the 40-million mark would send that number of people, rounded up to the nearest person. Depending on the spaces available, countries of population 30-40 million would receive one each, then the remaining randomized.

Basic human necessities are the next major point I'm going to discuss. For a successful colony the minimum is to have the following things; food, water, clothing, sleep and shelter. Beginning with food, there are certain industries of people that will be needed. For starters, farmers. Agricultural scientists will develop better plant varieties. It's reasonable to assume current crops will not be suited to the new habitat, so a capable team will assist development. I suggest a plant based diet short term, minimal livestock (transfer would be difficult). Regarding hydration: without knowledge of whether clean water is available; filtration is necessary. Chemists and engineers will maintain a supply of water. People living there will likely reuse water; either or both short and long term without a constant flow and to be sustainable. For clothing and sleep, sustainable materials would be easier to produce in early stages. Cotton, plus flax linen are interwoven into the farming industry. Seamstresses etc. making clothing would be less space and weight consuming than preparing year-round clothing for all 200 people. String, fabric, quilts, etc. could be made from plants. For shelter, there's certainly practical issues with distribution and ownership. Besides shelter itself, a system will be established to sell or provide communal shelter. My recommendation would be to denote an area of land per person, then a communal. This way, any trade can be done internally and doesn't require personnel to manage.

Next I will cover the ratio; in regards to age, gender and even disability. There's once again an ethical dilemma here of perfecting society, emulating the Earth or an alternate option. Speaking on a scientific level, a theoretically more resilient society would be drawn from better traits. This does, of course, exclude a lot of diversity but could build a community more resistant to disease, just to name one example. However, a strong foundation would be ideal. In the scenario that it would take time for another ship to arrive: a physically healthy individual will be more capable in a new environment. Ideally those with no underlying conditions, perhaps even of high intelligence, will have more success and are less likely to suffer from the journey. It sounds surface-level, but this creates a solid foundation for the future. Additionally, a generation of mostly younger-middle age travellers gives more time for life expectancy and the reasons mentioned above. I would also aim to send 4 non-binary people (randomly selected from the chosen nations) per the estimate that 2% of the global population identifies as non-binary, transgender etc. the remaining 98% will be split 50-50 between females and males, per global ratio.

The last concept I'm going to touch on is careers and occupations. This has been mentioned before in previous paragraphs, but there's a lot of depth I haven't yet covered. To start with, there's a few areas that must have definitive requirements. Medical personnel, from surgeons to doctors will be a necessity for healthy living. To start, I would also bring a minimum one psychiatrist to assist in any mental health struggles. Additionally, I would bring a minimum of 6 teachers to cover 'major' subjects. With children or potential children living there, an education system on a preliminary level is important. Thirdly, the essential technology and IT. A number of experts in general areas and specialists will be required. A 200 person civilization will begin in a small radius, not requiring much communication, but infrastructure will be important. Connection with Earth should be made, updates to be mutual. Finally, translation and language. It's unreasonable to expect all individuals sent to be knowledgeable in all languages, although one specific language fluency could be considered. Under the premise that most citizens are not that multilingual, translators will be crucial to early stages of development. AI and technology can play a part, expanding on the need for ties with Earth. These will take time however, and are not always precise to. Laws can follow UN guidelines in initial stages and change with a globally diverse task force of law enforcement and law management.

In conclusion, after research and thought, I have concluded the above points about a 200 person colony to another world. Nationality and diversity, basic human needs, equality and ratios, and occupations are just a few of the important things to consider in such a broad topic. These are my observations and conclusions to the problem at hand.