

Chapter 4



Immigration: Does It Strengthen or Threaten American Democracy?

On April 23, 2010 Arizona Republican Governor Jan Brewer signed into law the nation's most restrictive bill on illegal immigration. The law makes it a crime not to carry immigration papers and gives the police broad powers to detain anyone suspected of being in the county illegally. Proponents argued that the federal government was not adequately policing the border and the state needed to do something to discourage illegal immigration. Opponents of the law staged noisy demonstrations across the country charging that the law would encourage racial and ethnic profiling by police who could harass Hispanics without any evidence that they had committed a crime. Even before the bill was signed into law President Obama criticized it as threatening "to undermine basic notions of fairness that we cherish as Americans." The immigration issue was sure to play into the Fall 2010 elections with Republicans using their support of the Arizona law to mobilize voters concerned about jobs lost to illegal immigrations, while Democrats used Republican support of the law to rally Hispanic voters to their side.

Americans are deeply ambivalent about immigration. On the one hand, with the exception of Native Americans, all Americans are descendants of immigrants. Since its founding, the United States has probably been the most welcoming nation in the world for immigrants. The Statue of Liberty, a gift from France in 1886, is an enduring symbol of this welcoming attitude toward immigrants. At its base are written the famous words "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free." Throughout most of American history, no limits were placed on the number of immigrants who could enter. Unlike other nations, there is no "blood" requirement to becoming an American citizen. The road to citizenship is easy: basically, a person must pass a simple civics test and take an oath of allegiance to the United States and the Constitution. According

to the Fourteenth Amendment, anyone born in the United States, even if both parents are noncitizens, is automatically a U.S. citizen.

On the other hand, Americans have always been fearful of immigrants who are different from most Americans—ethnically, racially, religiously. Four years before the Statue of Liberty arrived Congress passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, prohibiting immigration by anyone of Chinese origin. Opposition to immigrants from non-European countries culminated in laws passed in the 1920s that established quotas for immigrants from each nation based on their percentage in the U.S. population at the time. Because most Americans were of Northern European stock (English, German, or Scandinavian), this meant the number of immigrants from Southern Europe (such as Italian or Slavic) and the rest of the world was strictly limited.

Strict limits on immigration ended in 1965 with the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act, which eliminated quotas and based immigration for the most part on family reunification. This meant that someone with a close relative living in the United States could probably immigrate here legally. More immigrants entered the United States in the 1990s than at any other decade in American history. In 2008 fully 12.5 percent of the population was foreign-born.

Not only has there been a huge surge in immigration since 1965, but there has also been an enormous diversification of the immigrant stream. Instead of emigrating from Europe, most immigrants now come from Asia, Central America, Latin America, and, to a lesser extent, Africa and Eastern Europe. Increasingly, the population of the United States resembles that of the world in general. This diversification of the immigrant stream coincided with the rise of multiculturalism, the idea that instead of a “melting pot” we should celebrate the diversity of cultures that make up the “mosaic” of America.

September 11, 2001, cast a pall over the celebration of diversity and the faith in liberal immigration laws. The terrorists who crashed planes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon had entered the United States under either a student visa or a visa waiver program. Americans demanded tighter border controls, especially in light of the estimated 11 million illegal immigrants already living in the country. In 2003 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was abolished and its functions were taken over by the newly formed Department of Homeland Security, which proceeded to deport thousands of illegal immigrants and make it more difficult for those wishing to study in the United States to acquire a student visa.

During the Bush administration, Congress failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform. “Comprehensive” reform means legislation that would both create a process for illegal, or undocumented, workers to become citizens and reduce the number of illegal immigrants through stricter border controls and harsher penalties on those who attempt to cross. (In 1986, Congress passed a controversial law that enabled millions of illegal immigrants to become citizens.) Although Democrats tend to be more pro-immigrant (some say to let in more Democratic-leaning voters) and Republicans generally support greater restrictions, positions on immigration do not follow strictly partisan lines. In the 2008 presidential campaign, President Obama promised he would pursue comprehensive immigration reform, but the economic crisis put that on the back burner.

The two essays that follow illustrate conflicting attitudes on immigration. Ben Wattenberg, a Senior Fellow at the conservative American Enterprise Institute, an author, and a frequent commentator on public television, argues that the declining birthrate in the United States requires large numbers of immigrants to meet the future demand for labor. The idea that immigrants will refuse to learn English or assimilate into American culture is false, Wattenberg maintains. In the long run, immigration will make America a stronger nation, one that can project its universal Western values around the globe.

Newt Gingrich, former Speaker of the House of Representatives and possible future candidate for the presidency, is much more critical of U.S. open immigration policies. Although Gingrich is not opposed to legal immigration, he is concerned that too many immigrants refuse to assimilate into American culture and he proposes several programs to encourage them to become patriotic Americans. Above all, Gingrich argues, immigration is a national security issue and America has to do whatever is necessary to protect itself from terrorists.

As you read through the two selections, think about the distinction made in the book's introduction between elite and popular democracy. How do these two approaches to democracy line up on immigration? On the one hand, the pro-immigration side would appear to be more popular democratic because it promotes easier paths to citizenship and voting rights for immigrants who are often poor. On the other hand, many argue that immigration harms working-class Americans by forcing them to compete with cheap labor at the same time that wealthy elites benefit from lower wages paid to many service workers such as maids, gardeners, and construction workers. You decide: Is immigration good or bad for average Americans?

Immigration Strengthens American Democracy

BEN WATTENBERG

Many leading thinkers tell us we are now in a culture clash that will determine the course of history, that today's war is for Western civilization itself. There is a demographic dimension to this "clash of civilizations." While certain of today's demographic signals bode well for America, some look very bad. If we are to assess America's future prospects, we must start by asking, "Who are we?" "Who will we

be?” and “How will we relate to the rest of the world?” The answers all involve immigration.

As data from the 2000 census trickled out, one item hit the headline jackpot. By the year 2050, we were told, America would be “majority nonwhite.” The census count showed more Hispanics in America than had been expected, making them “America’s largest minority.” When blacks, Asians, and Native Americans are added to the Hispanic total, the “nonwhite” population emerges as a large minority, on the way to becoming a small majority around the middle of this century.

The first thing worth noting is that these rigid racial definitions are absurd. The whole concept of race as a biological category is becoming evermore dubious in America. Consider:

Under the Clinton administration’s census rules, any American who checks both the black and white boxes on the form inquiring about “race” is counted as black, even if his heritage is, say, one eighth black and seven eighths white. In effect, this enshrines the infamous segregationist view that one drop of black blood makes a person black.

Although most Americans of Hispanic heritage declare themselves “white,” they are often inferentially counted as non-white, as in the erroneous *New York Times* headline which recently declared: “Census Confirms Whites Now a Minority” in California.

If those of Hispanic descent, hailing originally from about 40 nations, are counted as a minority, why aren’t those of Eastern European descent, coming from about 10 nations, also counted as a minority? (In which case the Eastern European “minority” would be larger than the Hispanic minority.)

But within this jumble of numbers there lies a central truth: America is becoming a *universal nation*, with significant representation of nearly all human hues, creeds, ethnicities, and national ancestries. Continued moderate immigration will make us an even more universal nation as time goes on. And this process may well play a serious role in determining the outcome of the contest of civilizations taking place across the globe.

And current immigration rates *are* moderate, even though America admitted more legal immigrants from 1991 to 2000 than in any previous decade—between 10 and 11 million. The highest previous decade was 1901–1910, when 8.8 million people arrived. In addition, each decade now, several million illegal immigrants enter the U.S., thanks partly to ease of transportation.

Critics like Pat Buchanan say that absorbing all those immigrants will “swamp” the American culture and bring Third World chaos inside our borders. I disagree. Keep in mind: Those 8.8 million immigrants who arrived in the U.S. between 1901 and 1910 increased the total American population by 1 percent per year. (Our numbers grew from 76 million to 92 million during that decade.) In our most recent decade, on the other hand, the 10 million legal immigrants represented annual growth of only 0.36 percent (as the U.S. went from 249 million to 281 million).

Overall, nearly 15 percent of Americans were foreign-born in 1910. In 1999, our foreign-born were about 10 percent of our total. (In 1970, the foreign-born portion of our population was down to about 5 percent. Most of the rebound resulted from a more liberal immigration law enacted in 1965.) Or look at the “foreign stock”

data. These figures combine Americans born in foreign lands *and* their offspring, even if those children have only one foreign-born parent. Today, America's "foreign stock" amounts to 21 percent of the population and heading up. But in 1910, the comparable figure was 34 percent—one-third of the entire country—and the heavens did not collapse.

We can take in more immigrants, if we want to. Should we?

Return to the idea that immigrants could swamp American culture. If that is true, we clearly should not increase our intake. But what if, instead of swamping us, immigration helps us become a stronger nation and a *swamper of others* in the global competition of civilizations?

Immigration is now what keeps America growing. According to the UN, the typical American woman today bears an average of 1.93 children over the course of her childbearing years. That is mildly below the 2.1 "replacement" rate required to keep a population stable over time, absent immigration. The "medium variant" of the most recent Census Bureau projections posits that the U.S. population will grow from 281 million in 2000 to 397 million in 2050 with expected immigration, but only to 328 million should we choose a path of zero immigration. That is a difference of a population growth of 47 million versus 116 million. (The 47 million rise is due mostly to demographic momentum from previous higher birthrates.) If we have zero immigration with today's low birthrates indefinitely, the American population would eventually begin to *shrink*, albeit slowly.

Is more population good for America? When it comes to potential global power and influence, numbers can matter a great deal. Taxpayers, many of them, pay for a fleet of aircraft carriers. And on the economic side it is better to have a customer boom than a customer bust. (It may well be that Japan's stagnant demography is one cause of its decade-long slump.) The environmental case could be debated all day long, but remember that an immigrant does not add to the global population—he merely moves from one spot on the planet to another.

But will the current crop of immigrants acculturate? Immigrants to America always have. Some critics, like Mr. Buchanan, claim that this time, it's different. Mexicans seem to draw his particular ire, probably because they are currently our largest single source of immigration.

Yet only about a fifth (22 percent) of legal immigrants to America currently come from Mexico. Adding illegal immigrants might boost the figure to 30 percent, but the proportion of Mexican immigrants will almost surely shrink over time. Mexican fertility has diminished from 6.5 children per woman 30 years ago to 2.5 children now, and continues to fall. If high immigration continues under such circumstances, Mexico will run out of Mexicans.

California hosts a wide variety of immigrant groups in addition to Mexicans. And the children and grandchildren of Koreans, Chinese, Khmer, Russian Jews, Iranians, and Thai (to name a few) will speak English, not Spanish. Even among Mexican-Americans, many second- and third-generation offspring speak no Spanish at all, often to the dismay of their elders (a familiar American story).

Michael Barone's book *The New Americans* theorizes that Mexican immigrants are following roughly the same course of earlier Italian and Irish immigrants. Noel

Ignatiev's book *How the Irish Became White* notes that it took a hundred years until Irish-Americans (who were routinely characterized as drunken "gorillas") reached full income parity with the rest of America.

California recently repealed its bilingual education programs. Nearly half of Latino voters supported the proposition, even though it was demonized by opponents as being anti-Hispanic. Latina mothers reportedly tell their children, with no intent to disparage the Spanish language, that "Spanish is the language of busboys"—stressing that in America you have to speak English to get ahead.

The huge immigration wave at the dawn of the twentieth century undeniably brought tumult to America. Many early social scientists promoted theories of what is now called "scientific racism," which "proved" that persons from Northwest Europe were biologically superior. The new immigrants—Jews, Poles, and Italians—were considered racially apart and far down the totem pole of human character and intelligence. Blacks and Asians were hardly worth measuring. The immigration wave sparked a resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, peaking in the early 1920s. At that time, the biggest KKK state was not in the South; it was Indiana, where Catholics, Jews, and immigrants, as well as blacks, were targets.

Francis Walker, superintendent of the U.S. Bureau of the Census in the late 1890s, and later president of MIT, wrote in 1896 that "The entrance of such vast masses of peasantry degraded below our utmost conceptions is a matter which no intelligent patriot can look upon without the gravest apprehension and alarm. They are beaten men from beaten races. They have none of the ideas and aptitudes such as belong to those who were descended from the tribes that met under the oak trees of old Germany to make laws and choose chiefs." (Sorry, Francis, but Germany did not have a good twentieth century.)

Fast-forward to the present. By high margins, Americans now tell pollsters it was a very good thing that Poles, Italians, and Jews emigrated to America. Once again, it's the *newcomers* who are viewed with suspicion. This time, it's the Mexicans, Filipinos, and people from the Caribbean who make Americans nervous. But such views change over time. The newer immigrant groups are typically more popular now than they were even a decade ago.

Look at the high rates of intermarriage. Most Americans have long since lost their qualms about marriage between people of different European ethnicities. That is spreading across new boundaries. In 1990, 64 percent of Asian Americans married outside their heritage, as did 37 percent of Hispanics. Black-white intermarriage is much lower, but it climbed from 3 percent in 1980 to 9 percent in 1998. (One reason to do away with the race question on the census is that within a few decades we won't be able to know who's what.)

Can the West, led by America, prevail in a world full of sometimes unfriendly neighbors? Substantial numbers of people are necessary (though not sufficient) for a country, or a civilization, to be globally influential. Will America and its Western allies have enough people to keep their ideas and principles alive?

On the surface, it doesn't look good. In 1986, I wrote a book called *The Birth Dearth*. My thesis was that birth rates in developed parts of the world—Europe,

North America, Australia, and Japan, nations where liberal Western values are rooted—had sunk so low that there was danger ahead. At that time, women in those modern countries were bearing a lifetime average of 1.83 children, the lowest rate ever absent war, famine, economic depression, or epidemic illness. It was, in fact, 15 percent below the long-term population replacement level.

Those trendlines have now plummeted even further. Today, the fertility rate in the modern countries averages 1.5 children per woman, 28 percent below the replacement level. The European rate, astonishingly, is 1.34 children per woman—radically below replacement level. The Japanese rate is similar. The United States is the exceptional country in the current demographic scene.

As a whole, the nations of the Western world will soon be less populous, and a substantially smaller fraction of the world population. Demographer Samuel Preston estimates that even if European fertility rates jump back to replacement level immediately (which won't happen) the continent would still lose 100 million people by 2060. Should the rate not level off fairly soon, the ramifications are incalculable, or, as the Italian demographer Antonio Golini likes to mutter at demographic meetings, “unsustainable ... unsustainable.” (Shockingly, the current Italian fertility rate is 1.2 children per woman, and it has been at or below 1.5 for 20 years—a full generation.)

The modern countries of the world, the bearers of Western civilization, made up one third of the global population in 1950, and one fifth in 2000, and are projected to represent one eighth by 2050. If we end up in a world with nine competing civilizations, as Samuel Huntington maintains, this will make it that much harder for Western values to prevail in the cultural and political arenas.

The good news is that fertility rates have also plunged in the less developed countries—from 6 children in 1970 to 2.9 today. By the middle to end of this century, there should be a rough global convergence of fertility rates and population growth.

Since September 11, immigration has gotten bad press in America. The terrorist villains, indeed, were foreigners. Not only in the U.S. but in many other nations as well, governments are suddenly cracking down on illegal entry. This is understandable for the moment. But an enduring turn away from legal immigration would be foolhardy for America and its allies.

If America doesn't continue to take in immigrants, it won't continue to grow in the long run. If the Europeans and Japanese don't start to accept more immigrants they will evaporate. Who will empty the bedpans in Italy's retirement homes? The only major pool of immigrants available to Western countries hails from the less developed world, i.e., non-white, and non-Western countries.

The West as a whole is in a deep demographic ditch. Accordingly, Western countries should try to make it easier for couples who want to have children. In America, the advent of tax credits for children (which went from zero to \$1,000 per child per year over the last decade) is a small step in the direction of fertility reflation. Some European nations are enacting similar pronatal policies. But their fertility rates are so low, and their economies so constrained, that any such actions can only be of limited help.

That leaves immigration. I suggest America should make immigration safer (by more carefully investigating new entrants), but not cut it back. It may even be wise to make a small increase in our current immigration rate. America needs to keep growing, and we can fruitfully use both high- and low-skill immigrants. Pluralism works here, as it does in Canada and Australia.

Can pluralism work in Europe? I don't know, and neither do the Europeans. They hate the idea, but they will depopulate if they don't embrace pluralism, via immigration. Perhaps our example can help Europeans see that pluralism might work in the admittedly more complex European context. Japan is probably a hopeless case; perhaps the Japanese should just change the name of their country to Dwindle.

Our non-pluralist Western allies will likely diminish in population, relative power, and influence during this century. They will become much grayer. Nevertheless, by 2050 there will still be 750 million of them left, so the U.S. needs to keep the Western alliance strong. For all our bickering, let us not forget that the European story in the second half of the twentieth century was a wonderful one; Western Europeans stopped killing each other. Now they are joining hands politically. The next big prize may be Russia. If the Russians choose our path, we will see what [nineteenth-century French theorist Alexis de] Tocqueville saw: that America and Russia are natural allies.

We must enlist other allies as well. America and India, for instance, are logical partners—pluralist, large, English-speaking, and democratic. We must tell our story. And our immigrants, who come to our land by choice, are our best salesmen. We should extend our radio services to the Islamic world, as we have to the unliberated nations of Asia through Radio Free Asia. The people at the microphones will be U.S. immigrants.

We can lose the contest of civilizations if the developing countries don't evolve toward Western values. One of the best forms of "public diplomacy" is immigration. New immigrants send money home, bypassing corrupt governments—the best kind of foreign aid there is. They go back home to visit and tell their families and friends in the motherland that American modernism, while not perfect, ain't half-bad. Some return home permanently, but they bring with them Western expectations of open government, economic efficiency, and personal liberty. They know that Westernism need not be restricted to the West, and they often have an influence on local politics when they return to their home countries.

Still, because of Europe and Japan, the demographic slide of Western civilization will continue. And so, America must be prepared to go it alone. If we keep admitting immigrants at our current levels there will be almost 400 million Americans by 2050. That can keep us strong enough to defend and perhaps extend our views and values. And the civilization we will be advancing may not just be Western, but even more universal: American.

Patriotic Immigration

NEWT GINGRICH

A chilling hearing before the Senate Intelligence Committee last year provides the starting point of our national debate on immigration reform. Former CIA Chief Porter Goss set the stage by testifying that “it may be only a matter of time” before al Qaeda or another terrorist group attempts to use a chemical, biological, or nuclear weapon against the United States. And then Admiral James Loy, the Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, added the detail that should have every American demanding immediate action about our uncontrolled borders: Loy testified that evidence “strongly suggests” that the same terrorists who are planning on using a weapon of mass destruction against the United States have considered using our south-west border as an entry point.

Nearly five years after 9/11, our bureaucratic system is so broken we don’t even know who is in our country. In the age of terrorism, no nation can afford to have uncontrolled borders with millions crossing illegally. There is no point in having a war on terrorism—much less a \$9 billion a year national missile defense program—when the same terrorists can rent a truck in Mexico and drive a weapon of mass destruction over the border. A government team recently proved that it was easy to do.

And the threat of uncontrolled borders isn’t confined to terrorism. Gangs, drug dealers, and common criminals are drawn to our border as lawlessness breeds more lawlessness. The sheriff of Val Verde County, Texas, reports that people crossing the U.S.–Mexico border illegally no longer bother running from the authorities. “They make it known to the deputies,” he said. “We’re going through; you’re not going to stop us.”

When our government fails to enforce immigration law, it sends a signal that our laws don’t matter. And when people learn that we won’t enforce some laws, they don’t respect other laws. The failure to control our borders has led to a dramatic increase in violent crime in our country. One government study found that in 2003 there were 74,000 criminals in state prisons who are here illegally and 147,000 in local jails.

Our immigration debate is about many things: how we see ourselves as a people; our compassion for those seeking a better life; and our respect for the rule of law. But first and foremost, we must treat immigration as a national security issue. We have an absolute obligation to control our borders. Not to close them, but to control them. The safety of our people depends on it. But many Americans believe their leaders in Washington are not serious about stopping illegal immigration and are rightly frustrated.

I don't worry about people who want to come to the United States to obey the law, work hard, pay taxes, and become Americans. In fact, I am delighted to have new Americans join our country, because historically they have been a source of enormous talent, energy, and courage. From Alexander Hamilton to Andrew Carnegie to Albert Einstein to Henry Kissinger to Arnold Schwarzenegger, people who wanted to improve their lives, and in the process improve the country, have enriched America.

America has a long history of absorbing and blending peoples of many languages and backgrounds. There have always been non-English newspapers in America and now we have non-English radio and television. I am also not worried that some immigrants come here only to earn money and then go home (Italian immigrants, in particular, did that in the late 19th century).

What worries me is the breakdown of will on the part of America's leaders to control our borders and to ensure that new immigrants learn to be American.

A Continent of Hope

Pope John Paul II had a beautiful and inspiring vision for America. From his first trip abroad to Mexico in 1979 to the mass he celebrated in Mexico City's Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 1999, he consistently spoke of America as a "Continent of Hope." By America, John Paul was referring to both North *and* South America to express his desire for greater unity and mutual respect.

The United States has a special place in this vision of a Continent of Hope. We are a very special nation because we are founded on a revolutionary idea: That we are all created equal—citizen and non-citizen alike—and endowed by our Creator with inalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

The idea of America as a Continent of Hope carries both privileges and responsibilities for the people of the United States. It means that every person has an inherent human dignity that must be respected, including those who are in our country illegally. But it also means that all of us must respect the laws that have been passed to ensure freedom and security. As Pope John Paul II recognized, "The rule of law is the necessary condition for establishing true democracy."

In fulfilling a vision of America as a Continent of Hope, two values are inextricably linked: our compassion for those who come to our country for a better life and our commitment to the rule of law. Just as we would betray this vision by turning our backs on the poverty and injustice suffered by our neighbors, we would also undermine the very foundation of our nation by tolerating eleven million people in our midst in open violation of our laws. If we fail to abide by either of these values, we risk becoming less of the nation our Founders and Pope John Paul II believed we could be, and which we have been for 230 years.

But how do we reconcile this inspiring vision of America with the day-to-day demands of controlling our borders? To build a Continent of Hope we need

a system of “patriotic immigration.” Patriotic immigration means knowing that all immigrants to our country are legal and accounted for, and that once they’re here, they learn to be Americans before they can become citizens. It means using the technology we have—today—to enforce our immigration laws. And it means that immigrants become Americans. Not that they simply mimic American popular culture, but that they learn the language, history, and values that bind us together as a nation.

The way forward lies in a logical set of step-by-step, sustainable solutions that build a momentum and over time will result in a rational and orderly immigration policy acceptable to a majority of the American people.

Controlling Our Borders

In Los Angeles, police are prohibited from asking about the immigration status of people they arrest. In Denver, police aren’t allowed to enforce laws against employing workers who are illegal. And in Seattle, law enforcement officials can’t report violent criminals that they believe are here illegally to federal immigration authorities.

All of these cities, and many more from Anchorage, Alaska, to Cambridge, Massachusetts, have declared themselves “sanctuary cities” and prohibit their police from enforcing federal immigration law. But maybe we shouldn’t be surprised that these cities have thrown up a white flag. The lack of respect for the law that began at the border and spread to American businesses routinely employing those here illegally was bound to infiltrate our cities.

Sanctuary cities—what should be called “lawless cities”—should lose their federal funding if they continue to refuse to enforce our immigration laws. Cracking down on these “don’t ask, don’t enforce” havens of lawlessness would be an important part of controlling our borders.

Our standard must be absolute: complete control of our borders and coasts. We have the technology and the capability to control border crossing. We simply need the will to use it. Secure card technology used very effectively by companies like Visa, MasterCard and American Express is one example we should adopt.

A comprehensive border control program should begin with demanding that everyone entering the United States provide a biometric identifier, like a thumbprint or an embedded retinal scan, along with a photograph. Background checks should screen out those with criminal records. Foreign governments that want their citizens to participate should turn over up-to-date records of convicted felons so they can be prohibited from entering the United States.

Saying No to Amnesty

Every parent knows that if you reward a behavior, you get more of it. That’s why amnesty would be a disaster both for the United States and for immigrants: By

rewarding breaking the law to enter our country, amnesty sends the signal that we will not enforce our laws. Moreover, the word would quickly spread that it will only be a matter of time before another amnesty is granted.

But more than the temptation it poses to would-be illegal immigrants, amnesty makes a fool out of the cousin back home or the hopeful Asian or African who is playing by the rules and waiting in line to enter the United States legally. It tells them that they are wasting their time trying to obey our laws. And it tells their governments that they don't need to reform their economies to provide more jobs and opportunity. All they have to do is allow or encourage emigration and rely on the economic engine of the United States to provide jobs for their workers—and checks sent back home.

Maybe the most compelling moral argument against amnesty is that it actually harms those who enter our country illegally. By encouraging more illegal immigration, amnesty encourages more people to come to our country only to live on the margins of society. It means more—not fewer—immigrants subject to exploitation by unscrupulous employers, criminals, and predatory businesses. Amnesty means more families living fearfully in the shadows instead of participating fully in their communities.

Instead of sending the message that our laws are meaningless, we should send the message that they are non-negotiable and at the heart of our system. Along with total border control, we must make it easier for people to enter the United States legally, to work for a set period of time, obey the law, and return home. The requirements for participation in a worker visa program should be tough and uncompromising. The first is essential: Everyone currently working in the United States illegally must return to their home country to apply for the worker visa program. Anything less than requiring those who are here illegally to return home to apply for legal status is amnesty, plain and simple.

Our out-of-control borders didn't get that way overnight, and transitioning from a pattern of illegal immigration to a legal system will take some time. Besides the obvious fact that it will become harder and harder to find work without participating in the worker visa program, those here illegally would have other incentives to return home to apply. If an individual working here illegally knows that improved border control will make it nearly impossible to cross the border again, that stepped up law enforcement and removal will dramatically increase the chances of being picked up and returned home, that there is a legal way to work here, and that there is a very reasonable transition period in which to return home and apply, then we should expect people will choose to participate in a dramatically improved immigration system that will save lives and protect the rule of law.

Work visa holders should have to fulfill other requirements as well. All work visa holders must sign an agreement to pay taxes, obey the law, and waive any rights to appeal their removal from the United States within seventy-two hours if they violate their agreement.

Also, critically, all work visa holders would have to carry a tamperproof, electronic “smart card” with their photo and the thumbprint or iris scan they

provided when they entered the United States. This would be their passport to legal employment. And to make sure that the program is administered effectively, it should be outsourced to a company like Visa, MasterCard, or American Express that has a proven track record of preventing fraud and ensuring accountability in a card program. Most Americans have zero confidence that the federal bureaucracy could run such a program competently, so we should give the job to those who can.

And finally, because it takes two to break the law by working here illegally—both an illegal worker and an illegal employer—we must get serious about penalizing employers who hire illegal workers. Astonishingly, the federal government did not levy a single fine on a single employer for hiring illegal workers in 2004. This must change, and under a worker visa program it would change. Employers who hire workers without smart cards that verify their legal status would receive staggering financial penalties that would escalate dramatically with a second and third offense. We must recognize that our failure to enforce our laws against employers who hire illegal workers has contributed to the explosion of illegal immigration into our country.

Making New Americans

For much of our history, America has absorbed waves of immigrants by helping newcomers assimilate into American culture. After all, there is no such thing as a genetic American. To become an American means becoming an American in values, culture, and historic understanding.

But in the last two generations the Left-liberal establishment has undermined and ridiculed American values, American history, and even the idea of American citizenship. Today, Left-liberals want voting opened to non-citizens, including those who are here illegally. That is why the Left-liberal fights against a voter identity card even though Americans overwhelmingly support the idea of limiting their elections to legal citizens. The Left-liberal regards national identity and patriotic commitment to America as irrelevant.

An essential part of encouraging patriotic immigration is a renewal of our commitment to what Senator Lamar Alexander calls patriotic integration: education about American citizenship based on American history; the English language; and the core values of American civilization. American citizenship is not just a piece of paper to be granted but a set of values to be understood and accepted. We must insist that permanent immigrants to this country are encouraged to become citizens, and that the path to citizenship is through a comprehensive understanding of the value, history, language, and culture of our country.

Eighty-eight percent of Americans agree that “schools should make a special effort to teach new immigrants about American values.” American feel so strongly about teaching America’s language and culture to new immigrants that 65 percent believe schools should help immigrants learn America’s language and

culture even if it means their native culture is neglected. When asked “what should be the bigger priority; teaching students to be proud of being part of this country and learning the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, or focusing on instilling pride in their ethnic group’s identity and heritage,” 79 percent of parents chose pride and learning about America.

Similarly, foreign-born parents know how important it is for their children to learn about their new country. In the same Public Agenda 2000 survey, 80 percent of Hispanic parents chose pride and learning about America and 73 percent of foreign-born parents preferred learning about America to their country of origin.

What We Can Do

At the federal and state levels, we can take a number of steps to encourage the teaching of American history to immigrants. The U.S. Department of Education should cooperate with state governments to create online American studies programs in every major city. The Office of Migrant Education should have an American studies program. Every English language instruction course should be required by federal law to base its instruction on patriotic American history.

One of the more sensitive and contentious questions surrounding assimilation of new immigrants is language. English is not and never has been the only language in America. We have a long tradition of people speaking many languages in their local community and with other immigrants. But English has been and should remain our language of government and public discourse.

Americans instinctively know that English matters—81 percent believe immigrants should learn English. Ninety percent believe speaking and writing English should be a primary characteristic of American citizenship. But instead of listening to the American people, the liberal establishment has done everything it can to diminish the importance of English and to promote bilingual education. We cannot let Left-liberals divide the country this way. One proposal to accelerate English fluency is to create a National Program for English Instruction. The program would be modeled after the highly successful “Ulpan Studies” program in Israel. Former Congressman Chris Cox of California describes the program in a bill he introduced in Congress:

Like the United States, Israel has a polyglot immigrant mix, including Eastern Europeans, Central Asians and Ethiopians. Every new immigrant to Israel is entitled to 500 hours of intensive Hebrew language training, which is designed to give them the language and practical skills to participate in everyday Israeli life. Although the program is not compulsory, participants receive a small stipend to defray expenses and receive a certificate upon successful completion of the program.

This certificate has real value, since many employers require an “Ulpan certificate” for a job and many schools require one for admission.

Chris Cox’s proposal is the kind of innovative solution that is a “win-win” for new immigrants and the future of America. Like the Israeli program, it would provide highly intensive English, American history, and civics training for immigrants so they can acquire the practical skills to participate fully in their communities and workplaces. To encourage participation, immigrants could be given a modest stipend. In addition, the time required for naturalization could be shortened for those who successfully complete the program.

And hand-in-hand with this focus on English language education should be a requirement that a written test in English of American history be passed by those wishing to become citizens. What’s more, Executive Order 13166 requiring federal documents to be published in many different languages should be rescinded. We must put an end to providing ballots and election materials in foreign languages. And we should renew our efforts to help immigrants learn English. And in return, we should ask immigrants to commit to learning and using the English language as part of being an American.

For four hundred years, from the founding of the Jamestown colony in 1607, people who believe their rights come from God have been building an exciting, prosperous, and free society in America. They have been open to people of many backgrounds and many languages but they have insisted that they become American.

We must return to that great tradition of being pro-immigration and pro-legality, being pro-newcomer and pro-integration into American history, American traditions, and American civic values.

This is the only path which will sustain American civilization for the next generation.

Discussion Questions

1. Do you have any relatives who were immigrants? If so, ask them what their experience was like. Did they feel welcome, and how long did it take before they began to participate in the political process?
2. Should illegal immigrants be eligible for welfare, food stamps, or Medicaid (government health insurance)?
3. How is being an immigrant today different from a hundred years ago? Is it more difficult today or easier?
4. Should employers who hire illegal immigrants be punished?

5. Should the United States construct a wall along the entire U.S.–Mexican border?
6. Instead of erecting a wall, should the United States provide economic development aid to Mexico so that Mexicans can find decent-paying jobs there?
7. In your experience, do most immigrants want to assimilate into American culture or do they want to maintain a separate culture?
8. Should legal immigrants be given the right to vote even before they become naturalized citizens?

Suggested Readings and Internet Resources

In *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004), Samuel Huntington argues that the recent wave of non-European immigrants threatens Americans' identity and cultural consensus. Patrick J. Buchanan sounds the alarm about current high levels of immigration in his *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2006). Aviva Chomsky attacks what she calls "myths" about immigration in *"They Take Our Jobs!" and 20 Other Myths About Immigration* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2007). In *Heaven's Door: Immigration Policy and the American Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999) George Borjas documents the negative effects of immigration on low-wage-earning Americans. For a scholarly and critical analysis of efforts to restrict immigration, see Roger Daniels, *Guarding the Golden Door: American Immigration Policy Since 1882* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004). In *Remaking the American Mainstream: Assimilation and Contemporary Immigration* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), Richard Alba and Victor Nee argue that as immigrants assimilate into American culture, they also change it.

National Immigration Forum

www.immigrationforum.org

Considered the nation's foremost immigrant rights organization, the National Immigration Forum does research and promotes policies to curb illegal immigration and help immigrants assimilate into American society.

Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)

www.fairus.org

FAIR promotes the view that excessive immigration imposes burdens on governments and schools and creates greater income inequality in American society.

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS)

www.uscis.gov

Part of the Department of Homeland Security, the USCIS website provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on immigration and naturalization news, applications, forms, and announcements.