

Debunking Immigration Myths

Myth: *We can't put limits on immigration because immigration is what built America. After all, we're "a nation of immigrants."*

Rebuttal: Actually, America was built by colonists. And they never intended for us to be "a nation of immigrants." That phrase wasn't even invented until the 1960's during the Cold War against the Soviet Union. That's when U.S. political leaders tried to convince other nations to ally with us against the communists. They wanted to convince foreigners that the U.S. was a country made up of all the people of the world. But that's not true. In reality, America has a long tradition of restricted immigration that goes back to colonial times. About 100 years after the Founding, immigrants did indeed make substantial contributions to America's population during a temporary period of expansion. But the issue today is that America is no longer a young country with a frontier. Today we are a mature, settled nation. We no longer need, nor can we accommodate, the large-scale immigration that is appropriate to building a young nation.

Myth: *Immigrants do the jobs Americans refuse to do. If it weren't for immigrants, no one would harvest our crops.*

Rebuttal: Prior to 1965 when Congress opened the borders, there was very little immigration. In fact, between 1925 and 1965, there was even a period of net *emigration* out of the United States. During this time, our grass was getting cut, our meat was being packed, our children were being watched, and our houses were being cleaned. The idea that somehow our country suddenly cannot operate a sophisticated economy without an unlimited supply of foreigners is absurd.

A socially destructive system of cheap labor is not the way our farms or our economy should operate. In the long-run for our nation, cheap labor is not cheap at all. An endless stream of cheap labor presents a growing expense for welfare, criminal justice, and the numerous costs related to rising social conflict.

It is not true that native-born Americans will not do hard, dirty, unpleasant work. In fact, most of that work is *still* done by native-born citizens. Many still work in agriculture, even though their wages are severely depressed by competition from foreigners.

It is not the jobs that U.S. citizens find offensive; it is the low wages. Foreign workers flooding the U.S. labor market are bidding down the wages being offered for those jobs. The U.S. should not force its own workers to compete for jobs with Third World workers who are content with Third World working conditions.

This is particularly the case with agriculture. During the past 20 years, farmworkers' wages have declined significantly. Cutting immigration would allow their wages to rise, and promote the use of machinery to harvest crops. Higher wages, contrary to the claims of growers, would not significantly

boost prices for consumers, according to studies by the Washington-based Center for Immigration Studies.

In situations where growers genuinely cannot find help, the government currently allows them to bring in foreign workers, temporarily, under the H-2A program. Many growers, however, find it more convenient to hire illegals than to comply with the standards of that program.

In terms of meeting our agricultural needs, we should let history be our guide. Sadly, our country once believed that slaves were necessary to plant and harvest crops. Paying slave wages to farmworkers is not a great improvement over that system.

Myth: *America has lots of room, especially out West. So what if the population doubles? (The U.S. Census Bureau says that the U.S. population will double this century).*

Rebuttal: The open spaces one sees from an airplane are not where the projected 260 million new immigrants and their families will settle. Much of that land is rocky and mountainous. Immigrants are settling in the already overcrowded urban areas of the country just like they always have. Much of America's open spaces are being used for food production for our own people and to sustain tens of millions of people in other countries. Open spaces are also part of our national heritage of parks, wilderness, and other recreation areas. Do we want them bulldozed to make room for housing projects? The criterion for determining whether we can absorb more people is not absolute land area, but *carrying capacity*. No population can live beyond the ability of the environment to sustain that population. Unfortunately, America's high population growth rate is already adversely affecting our environment. The ill effects are seen in the pollution of lakes and rivers and air, and in the increasing loss of farmland. An average of two million acres of farmland are lost each year to urban sprawl and soil erosion. There is no new farmland, but new suburbs are growing to accommodate the growing population. The Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, D.C., estimates that immigrants and their offspring now account for nearly 70 percent of America's population growth.

Myth: *Immigrants eventually become assimilated, strengthening America.*

Rebuttal: Some do assimilate. But most Third World immigrants come to the U.S. for personal economic gain, not because they cherish our democratic system or the ideals of Thomas Jefferson. Ethnic pressure groups representing the immigrants encourage them to preserve their culture and language at taxpayers' expense. Among multiculturalist activists, "assimilation" is considered racist. They believe "diversity" of cultures and languages should be the ideal. When immigrants and/or their children do become voting citizens, many vote in blocks (Mexican-American, El Salva-

doran-American, Guatemalan-American, etc.), not for the good of America, but for personal economic gain and government-sponsored privileges such as affirmative action, which come at the expense of others.

Myth: *At least many of the illegal aliens are better off in the U.S. doing menial jobs than they are in their own country.*

Rebuttal: That may be true for the illegal aliens in the short run and for the businesses that hire them. But for many illegals who struggle in the U.S. for low wages under the threat of detection and deportation, the legacy of exploitation by unscrupulous businessmen remains for many generations to come, creating resentment of America and hindering assimilation of even their American-born offspring. Resentment of America is fueling the rise of anti-American ethnic organizations in the U.S. such as MECHA whose nationwide college and high school members pledge to “take back” what they call *Aztlan*, the U.S. southwest territory ceded in 1848 to the U.S. after the Mexican War.

Myth: *Immigrants come here to work. That means we benefit by having them pay taxes.*

Rebuttal: Yes, some high-skilled immigrants pay their own way. But the fact is, most immigrants don't. Most illegal aliens, for example, do not receive a typical paycheck with tax deductions. They are frequently paid in cash and *do not* pay taxes. Even when they do pay taxes (which is only possible if they use fraudulent Social Security numbers or government assigned ID tax numbers), their meager income is not enough to cover all the benefits they receive, such as medical expenses and schooling for their children. Just visit the maternal ward at the L.A. County hospital. There, illegal immigrant women are having thousands of children per year free of charge and can't afford them once they give birth. But that doesn't stop them from having even more children — most learn how to work the system so that they receive cash assistance and food stamps. And don't forget that their children are entitled to free public education, and are considered U.S. citizens because they were born here.

A study by Prof. Donald Huddle of Rice University found that America's net costs from immigration (benefits given minus taxes received) will reach \$80 billion a year by 2004. That's because today's immigrants, mostly unskilled and uneducated, use welfare benefits at higher rates than the native born. A study by the Center for Immigration Studies found that an average male immigrant from Mexico will cost U.S. taxpayers \$55,000 over his lifetime. All the evidence shows that the net results of mass immigration cost the taxpayer significantly more than aliens pay in taxes.

Myth: *Immigrants have a good work ethic.*

Rebuttal: They do? What about the illegal aliens? Is it ethical to break the law by sneaking into the country and stealing a job? It depends on what one means by “work ethic.” If it means that immigrants will allow themselves to be exploited by profit hungry employers, then they have a good

work ethic. But the fact is, a lot of American citizens have a good “work ethic,” too, and they shouldn't be forced out of work by foreigners willing to work for lower wages. It is irrelevant if immigrants have a good work ethic. They are not better people than Americans.

Myth: *Immigrants are needed to support America's aging population, and to keep Social Security solvent in the future.*

Rebuttal: That statement assumes that immigrants make a net contribution to Social Security. But they don't. A study by the Rand Corporation found that immigrants' use of Social Security benefits results in a net cost to Social Security of about \$1,000 per person. One reason is because Social Security gives a better return on dollars paid into the system to people with lower incomes. And immigrants generally have lower incomes than the native-born, and work fewer years in the U.S. Fact is, immigrants are a *net drain* on Social Security.

Myth: *There is no stopping immigration. The Border Patrol is overwhelmed. We couldn't keep them out even if we wanted to.*

Rebuttal: We can't keep them out now because the Border Patrol has only 8,000 people to guard a 4,000 mile border along Canada and Mexico. The Border Patrol has fewer personnel than the Chicago City police. A University of Texas study found that the Border Patrol needs 16,000 agents along the Mexican border alone. Immigration can be controlled if the government is willing to fund protecting the borders.

Myth: *People who live in oppressive countries have a right to better their lives by moving to the United States.*

Rebuttal: If everyone has the right to move here, then the U.S. would be overwhelmed. There are more than 2 billion impoverished people in the world. They cannot all fit here. We do not have unlimited resources in land and water. By admitting so many immigrants each year, we are already inadvertently rewarding the governments that many immigrants want to flee. We're providing a safety valve that permits oppressors to get rid of resistance and remain in power. Besides, most immigrants to the U.S. come from countries with friendly, democratic countries with whom the U.S. has good relations, like Mexico and India. Most immigrants aren't fleeing oppression at all.

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