

The issue of how much and what kind of immigration we should allow in this country has fluctuated from generous to xenophobic. From our beginnings and during the 19th century, we needed workers, farmers, and pioneers. The Chinese were welcomed to build our railways but then hunted down and murdered afterwards, culminating in barring them completely until their survivors were once again welcomed after the war. Hordes of other displaced survivors of World War II were welcomed, as were the displaced of the Vietnam war and any Cubans able to flee Cuba. Priorities were given to refugees from Communism.

Mexicans have been welcomed when their labor was needed and then demonized when too many were fleeing the misrule of Latin America. We are in a new phase of demonization, this time led by our own president.

President Trump has not invented the policy of demonizing immigrants; there has always been an underbelly of citizens who thought of foreigners as threatening to their culture, bringing disease and criminality, and wanting them deported and walls erected. However, it is really time to put some light, rather than heat, into this issue.

Bret Stephens, a centrist conservative Republican columnist (NY Times) recently attempted to provide some fact-based statistics on immigration. To summarize, he noted:

- 1) America has a population density of 35 people per square kilometer as opposed to 212 for little Switzerland and 271 for the UK. We are vastly underpopulated for the land we have.
- 2) The US fertility rate has fallen to a record low. Without immigration, we will become like Japan, a country with old people and few young enough to care for us.
- 3) We have a labor shortage in multiple industries nationwide. Crops are going unpicked, hotels and restaurants unstaffed, while people willing to work are being kept out.
- 4) Rural America, the home of the majority of Trump voters, is emptying out. Small towns are dying, with the exception of immigrants happy to live in them.
- 5) The immigrant share of the US population is only 13.5%; in Israel, it is 22.6%, Australia 27.7%, and there is a demonstrable correlation between high rates of immigration and economic growth.
- 6) Immigrants, legal or otherwise, are more law abiding than the rest of us, more entrepreneurial, churchgoing, married with children, and with work ethics that many of us should envy. These are the facts.

The fantasies are that immigrants will steal our jobs and work for less money (unions would prevent this) and true believers delude themselves that unemployed under-educated White men will pick strawberries.

This has become a Democratic vs Republican issue, but it should not be. We are in the midst of a national brawl in which our political parties are having difficulty in keeping their heads above water. Republicans are stuck with an embarrassing leader who evokes our darkest fears and hatreds and Democrats refuse to consider any criticism of completely open borders. I suggest that there is a middle way, a way that accepts facts and a way that also recognizes values.

If we all accept that people running from terribly misruled countries at great costs to themselves, deserve a hearing in their quest for asylum, we will not use the money for a stupid wall but spend it on enough judges to hear these cases.

If we accept that our ill-run southern neighbors can be helped to improve, the best example of this is Columbia, once the cartel capital of the world, we will re-staff the State Department and let our international experts get back to work with useful programs. Columbians are no longer fleeing.

And finally, along with all the other facts supporting more immigration, we do need to pay attention to valid cultural concerns, concerns that both Republicans and Democrats should share. We need to revisit how immigrants in the past were

integrated into the values of our culture. We taught civics and American values in schools, including classes for immigrants. Next time, I will make a case for the American Creed and Western Civilization. They need revisiting.

678 words

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