



## Talking Points

by Dan Fernandes

### Stop Bashing Immigrants

Conservative talk radio and political campaign ads are full of concern these days about how immigrants are taking our jobs, burdening our welfare state, and increasing crime. Employers of illegal workers are vilified. There are even plans for building a fence at the Mexican border.

Fortunately, none of the complaints against immigrants are valid. Here are some arguments to counter the immigrant bashers.

Immigrants cause unemployment? No, because workers are also consumers, so population expansion can never create unemployment. Furthermore, Cato has shown that cities with the most immigrants have the lowest unemployment.

Immigrants send money out of country? Yes, but all that money eventually comes back. A dollar is a claim against the U.S. economy, and it would be foolish to forfeit that claim.

Immigrants are over-represented in the prison population? Not when you adjust for age, and subtract those detained for simply being illegal.

Immigrants burden the welfare state? Well, everyone does, but immigrants less so because they tend to be younger and require less healthcare. And don't forget, immigrants pay taxes too.

"My ancestors came here legally!" Yes, that's because there were no quota limits before 1924.

"Immigrants don't assimilate!" I'll bet they were saying that

about your ancestors one hundred or more years ago.

Having countered some of the negative claims about immigration, what about the benefits? The primary benefit is that immigration creates wealth in the same way that free trade creates wealth. Immigration is a form of international trade in labor. The single best thing America can do for other countries is not foreign aid; it is to allow free trade in goods and services, labor and capital.

In addition to economic arguments, there are human arguments as well. People have a right to migrate; it is called freedom of movement. Think of the Berlin Wall and the people in the captive countries of Eastern Europe. Migration is an important check on tyranny. Why is keeping people out any different from keeping people in?

Our immigration laws are a bungling attempt at economic and cultural central planning. Current law, existing since 1968, places an annual ceiling on legal immigrant visas of 20,000 per country of origin. What arrogance that our lawmakers would think they know how many immigrants our country would need, even into the future!

What to do about illegal immigration? I suggest we simply repeal the visa limits. That is the situation we had before 1924, when America stood for freedom. Illegal immigration will dry up as legal immigration expands. Total immigration might increase, but that might be a good thing. Bad law has been the problem all along, and once again, freedom is the answer. □

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