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Myths and Deceptions about Illegal Immigration in America

I would like to address several myths about immigration, especially illegal immigration, in America.

Myth 1: Immigrants come to America to improve their lives, and in doing so, they improve the lives of Americans

While it is true that many immigrants come to America in order to better their lives, there are still others who come for nefarious reasons. A case in point is Pablo Serrano Vitorino, who in the first week of March this year began a rampage of murder, beginning a few miles from my home in the State of Kansas, and ending several miles away in the neighboring State of Missouri. In Kansas, Serrano killed four persons; in Missouri, he killed another man. He committed these five murders in a 24 hour period. Serrano's story is sadly not uncommon, and is indicative of the dysfunction and indifference endemic to the government agencies responsible for enforcing immigration laws in America.

To begin with, Serrano is in the country illegally, and not as a new arrival. He came to America without permission or documentation in the mid-1990s. Within a few months of his stay in America, he gave evidence that he was a public menace. In 1998 and 2003, the police

apprehended him for threatening his wife with a rifle. She did not press charges in either case. He beat his brother savagely in 2003. This led to his being deported. However, he returned soon afterward to live again in the United States. Over the years, he has had many encounters with law enforcement. But due to bungling and neglect, he has been neither arrested nor deported for a second time.

It should be noted that the law specifies imprisonment for someone guilty of returning to the country after deportation. Entering the country is a misdemeanor; entering after deportation is a felony. Pablo Serrano ought to have been put in prison years ago. In both 2014 and 2015, he was apprehended for traffic violations, but authorities at ICE, the acronym for Immigration and Customs Enforcement, misunderstood alerts from police about Serrano and he continued to live in the State of Kansas undetected. These oversights are tragic, since they allowed Serrano to run amuck and eventually commit mass murder. Americans are outraged by cases like Serrano's because, had the law been enforced, and had Serrano not been allowed in the country in the first place, five people would not have lost their lives.

Someone might predictably protest that one can find criminals in any group in a populous country. Why single out illegal immigrants? The reply is that crime should be dealt with wherever it is found. But there is disproportionate crime in the community of illegal immigrants. There are thousands of Pablo Serranos roaming about American society. This is not to mention the ones apprehended and actually put in prison. A striking statistic is that 55,000 immigrants occupy federal prisons. Additionally, 296,000 illegal aliens are in state and local incarceration facilities.¹ While illegal immigrants account for 3.5 percent of the population in America, they are responsible for 36.7% of all sentences handed down by federal courts.² Over 25% of inmates in federal prisons are illegal immigrants.³

¹ Ann Coulter, *Adios America! The Left's Plan to Turn Our Country into a Third World Hell Hole*. (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2015), p. 101.

² Caroline May, "Illegal Immigrants Accounted for Nearly 37% of Federal Sentences in Fiscal Year, 2014," *Breitbart News Service*, July 7, 2015.

Furthermore, we should not overlook that the perpetrators in this century of America's most infamous terrorist events were immigrants. Most of the terrorists who worked their evil on September 11, 2001 were in the country illegally, most on expired visas. The Tsarnaev brothers, who perpetrated the terrorist bombings at the Boston Marathon on April 15, 2013, were immigrants from Chechnya. They had come under FBI surveillance with no effect, even though they had cut the throat of two American Jews two years before they succeeded in killing three and injuring 264 persons at the finish line of the Boston marathon.⁴

These are the kinds of events that outrage most Americans. They are why the Pew Research Center found that 69 percent of Americans want to restrict and control immigration rates—72 percent of whites, 66 percent of blacks, and 59 percent of Hispanics.⁵ Gallup polls show that by two to one, Americans want immigration levels reduced⁶; and Reuters found that by nearly three to one, Americans want immigration levels reduced.⁷

Another policy that angers Americans is the formation of sanctuary cities. Many Americans suffer because the government, as a self-conscious policy in many American cities, habitually ignores the crimes of illegal immigrants, choosing neither to jail nor deport them. The policy, frequently endorsed by municipal police departments and mayors, state governors, and federal agents, regards illegal immigrants as victims, and judges that it is unfair to disadvantage them in their efforts to live in America. The policy is an egregious affront to the expectation that people abide the law. According to the

³ Randall Hoven, "Illegal Aliens Murder at a Much Higher Rate than American Citizens Do." *The American Thinker*, July 15, 2015.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵ Pew Research Center, "American Values Survey," April 2015, <http://www.people-press.org/values-questions/q40n/more-restrictions-on-people-coming-to-live-in-our-country/#race>. Cited in Mark Levin, *Plunder and Deceit* (New York, Threshold Editions, 2015), p. 108.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

rule of law, should the police apprehend an illegal committing a crime in a municipal jurisdiction, there is an expectation that the police will notify ICE and have the lawbreaker deported or imprisoned. However, the existence of sanctuary cities aids and abets the harboring of illegal aliens who commit crimes, like Pablo Serrano. Officials who sponsor sanctuary-city policies predictably feel smug, self-righteous, and politically correct in protecting illegal aliens. But where are these morally superior authorities when innocent Americans are being victimized by such criminals? While these bureaucrats are congratulating themselves for their enlightened attitudes about illegal immigrants, they are out of harm's way when some of these immigrants commit crimes; nor are they usually available to comfort the families whose loved ones may have become victims.

Until recently, many Americans did not know about sanctuary cities. The subject does not get attention, because the media, as a rule, downplays the commission of crimes by immigrants, especially by illegal immigrants. But last year a young woman, Kate Steinle, while touring San Francisco with her family, was shot and killed by an illegal alien, Francisco Sanchez, a Mexican illegal immigrant. The gun Sanchez used he stole from the car of a U.S. Bureau of Land Management agent, who left his car unlocked in downtown San Francisco. A few exceptional, conscientious journalists, sick of the media omitting stories of crimes committed in sanctuary cities, doggedly kept the story about Kate Steinle on the cable-news cycle. The event brought to light that there are sanctuary cities, at last provoking considerable outrage about such policies.

American anger further escalated when the public learned about the background of Francisco Sanchez, the man who shot Kate Steinle. He first came to America in 1991. Between 1991 and 2009, he was deported five times. Along the way, he managed to obtain seven felony convictions, none of which kept him from being released and roaming American streets. At the time he was killing Kate Steinle, he was on probation in the State of Texas. He had broken the terms of that probation by leaving the State of Texas, coming to California, where he committed murder.

While I have highlighted only two cases, it is important to recognize that these events are against a background of considerable crime in America. Native-born Americans also commit a lot of crime. The country has not done a good job managing crime among its citizens. Why has it stupidly compounded this ineffective system of dealing with domestic crime by having open borders?

My remarks thus far expose the myth that immigrants are always a blessing to a society. In the remainder of my lecture, I would like to address a few other myths.

Myth 2: America is a Nation of Immigrants

Perhaps this is not a myth but a half-truth. It is certainly the case that America has encouraged and celebrated waves of immigration in its history. But it is important not to overlook that these waves of immigration were historically followed by pauses so that assimilation could take place. Traditionally, America believed that immigration exists for the improvement of the country. Today, there's a presumption that immigration has value primarily for the sake of the immigrants. This attitude is a sea-change in traditional American outlook about immigration. "America has been a nation of restricted and interrupted immigration as much as it has been a nation of immigrants."⁸

The so-called "Great Wave of Immigration" into the United States took place from 1900 to 1910. Nine million people, mostly Germans and Italians, legally entered the country. Between 1910 and 1920, six million more arrived. But afterward, between 1921 and 1965, immigration slowed considerably. The government made a self-conscious effort to assimilate the new immigrant population. My own godparents, Francis and Elizabeth Kovach, were among the relatively small cohort of immigrants who were allowed into America between 1945

⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *Who Are We? The Challenges to America's National Identity* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), p. 195.

and 1950. They were Hungarians. To immigrate to America, they had to virtually declare refugee status, which my Godfather could make some case for because he was forced into a labor camp by the Germans in World War II. In spite of this status, however, he had to obtain a sponsor for his family. He also had to have virtual assurance of employment before he immigrated. His sponsor had to vow responsibility for any risk should the family they were sponsoring become unemployed, indigent, or criminal.

Many Poles who have immigrated are familiar with this kind of experience. Many in this audience probably have family members who have had to run a similar gauntlet for immigration into America. Legal immigrants are annoyed that they have to navigate through a challenging bureaucracy, sometimes for years, in order to immigrate when, in contrast, because of lax and irresponsible immigration enforcement, illegal aliens, by the hundreds every day, walk across the border from Mexico. It is not as though native-born Americans do not welcome newcomers. America has the most generous legal immigration policy in the world. 1.7 million persons immigrated legally to America in 2015.⁹ America admits more legal immigrants than all the other countries of the globe admit combined! And yet that doesn't satisfy those who advocate a radical open-border policy, even though one-fourth of the population of Mexico now resides in the United States.¹⁰ The government officially states that 11 million are in America illegally. But this is a stale figure that was put forward by the census bureau in the 1990's. The count is probably now more like 20 to 30 million. The math speaks for itself: over 700,000 persons migrate illegally to the United States every year, and they remain.¹¹

The American government was not always so indifferent about illegal aliens. One does not have to go back to the remote past to find

⁹ See this web-site: <http://www.ibtimes.com/immigration-us-2015-reaches-new-record-immigrant-population-421-million-people-study-2053038>.

¹⁰ Ann Coulter, *Adios America!*, p. 69.

¹¹ Colorado Alliance for Immigration Reform: <http://www.cairco.org/issues/how-many-illegal-aliens-reside-in-united-states>.

an America that did not tolerate the phenomenon. In 1948, President Harry Truman, and, in 1956, President Dwight Eisenhower methodically deported millions of illegal aliens. Today deportation is spoken of in hushed tones, as a possibility beyond contemplation. It is curious that people have forgotten the historical precedent during Truman's and Eisenhower's administrations. The good news is that deportation is not necessary. This is worth noting, since sometimes in the media there is a caricature of Americans who protest open borders as rabid xenophobes and nativists. In spite of this rhetoric, there is no significant player in American politics or culture who advocates mass deportations. Deportations are simply unnecessary. A simpler, and humane, solution is to mandate and enforce documentation for employment and to deny aliens government benefits, which, after all, are paid mostly by citizen tax payers. As Milton Friedman observed many years ago, "It's just obvious you can't have free immigration and a welfare state."¹²

1965 was the benchmark year for radical change in American immigration policy. That was the year when attitudes about both legal and illegal immigration began to change. The Hart-Cellar Act, a piece of legislation championed by Senator Ted Kennedy, shifted the standard for immigration away from the question, "What can the immigrant do for America?", to "What can America do for the immigrant?"

The bill abolished the decades-old policy of national quotas, which was said to be discriminatory because it favored immigrants from Europe over the Third World. Thus it increased immigration levels from each hemisphere, setting in motion a substantial increase in immigration from Latin America,

Asia, and Africa—to the detriment of previously favored aliens from Europe.

The bill also introduced a system of chain migration, which, as the Center for Immigration Studies notes, 'gave higher preference to the

¹² Peter Brimelow, "Milton Friedman at 85," *Forbes*, Dec. 29, 1997, 52.

relatives of American citizens and permanent resident aliens than to applicants with special job skills.’¹³

Legal immigration significantly increased in the wake of the Hart-Cellar Act.

Myth 3: Immigration improves the national economy

There are those who support illegal immigration on grounds that “illegal immigrants will do work Americans won’t do.” Their claim is that Americans have become pampered and will not stoop to do work that does not meet their high-pay demands. Americans, they assert, will not pursue work as a day-laborer, a domestic worker, or service employee. The facts show otherwise. Studies reveal that there are more native-born Americans than illegal immigrants who occupy jobs that purportedly only illegal immigrants will take.¹⁴ Secondly, Americans will be attracted to all kinds of jobs, if the wages are agreeable. Realizing these facts, Americans are now suspicious that the bromide, “Illegal immigrants will do work Americans will not do,” is an excuse to exploit illegal immigrants as a permanent underclass. This exploitation can take two forms: (1) the advocacy of open borders so as to bring in cheap labor that suits the interests of some corporations, especially in the agri-business sector; or (2) the advocacy of open borders so as to bring in potential voters for the Democrat Party, on the supposition that, since illegal immigrants seek the benefits of the welfare state, they will vote for the Democrat Party, as the Party of entitlements. After all, there is a reason that cynics call illegal immigrants “undocumented Democrats.”

At any rate, many Americans, having become aware of these agendas, are opposing more and more the policy of an open border. Still,

¹³ Mark Levin, *Liberty and Tyranny* (New York: Threshold Editions, 2009), pp. 150-151.

¹⁴ Mark Levin, *Plunder and Deceit*, p. 97.

I worry that the ideologues with the agendas are succeeding. The Center for Immigration Studies reports that legal and illegal immigration will soar to 51 million in the next eight years, representing 82 percent of the population growth in America. The fact is that the immigrant population is growing four times faster than the native-born population.¹⁵

Illegal immigration boomed as economic conditions in the Latin American world deteriorated and the American welfare state attracted people from disadvantaged countries. The resulting increase in foreign-born population in America has been measurably significant. Its impact on the income of Americans has been measurable as well. In 2015, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reported to the Senate Judiciary Committee that Between 1970 and 2013, the estimated foreign-born population in the United States increased from 9,740,000 to 41,348,066, respectively, an increase of 31,608,066 persons, representing a percentage increase of 324% over this 43 year period; . . . the reported income of the bottom 90% of tax filers in the United States decreased from an average of \$44,621 in 1970 to \$30,980 in 2013 for an aggregate decline of \$2,641 or a percent decline of 8% over this 43 year period; . . . the share of income held by the bottom 90% of the U.S. income distribution declined from 68.5% in 1970 to 53.0% in 2013, an absolute decline of 15.5 percentage points over this 43 year period.”¹⁶

The deterioration of income levels especially affects lower-educated and lower-skilled workers, including the young who first seek entry into the labor force. Since most illegal immigrants lack a high school education, they are bound to compete with these cohorts of workers in the population. Open border policies, mainly advocated by leaders in the Democrat Party, have contributed to the ‘inequality gap’

¹⁵ Ibid, p. 107.

¹⁶ Quoted in Mark Levin, *Plunder and Deceit*, p. 98.

between rich and poor. And yet elimination of the inequality gap is a persistent theme of the Democrat Party.¹⁷

As income levels of the native-born population decline, it is not advisable to allow into the country illegal immigrants who will compete for jobs. The trend in unemployment is evident and disturbing. In 2000, there were 41 million native-born Americans between the ages of 16 and 65 who were not working. By 2007, there were 48.2 million who were not working. In 2014, the number had risen to 58 million. Seventeen million fewer native-born Americans are working today than were working in the year 2000. The labor force participation rate of 62.9% is the lowest since 1979. Only 62.9 percent, or less than two-thirds of the population, is employed.¹⁸

A report by The Heritage Foundation is telling:

On average, unlawful immigrant households received \$24,721 per household in government benefits and services in Fiscal Year 2010. This figure includes direct benefits, means-tested benefits, education, and population-based services received by the household but excludes the cost of public goods, interest on the government debt, and other payments for prior government functions. By contrast, unlawful immigrant households on average paid only \$10,334 in taxes.

Thus, unlawful immigrant households received \$2.40 in benefits and services for each dollar paid in taxes.’ ‘All unlawful immigrant households together [in 2010] received \$93.7 billion per year in government benefits and services and paid \$39.2 billion, yielding an aggregate annual deficit of \$54.5 billion.¹⁹

52 percent of legal immigrant households with children are on government assistance. In all, nearly 60 percent of immigrants—legal and illegal—are on government assistance, compared with 39 percent of native households.. As Ann Coulter asks, “Why would any country

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 99.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 104.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 106.

voluntarily bring in people who have to be supported by the taxpayer?”²⁰

At this point, I'd like to address a final myth.

Myth 4: Immigration enhances, does not harm, American culture

Coulter observes that these economic consequences are bound to alter American culture. These consequences are the legacy of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965, which moved away from preferring immigrants with skills, education, and cultural origins which were amenable to American culture. Instead, it mandated preference for chain migration generated by immigrant families already in the country. Coulter explains that this shift has had both economic and cultural significance.

Immigrants from nineteen of the top twenty-five source countries are more likely to be in poverty than native white Americans, generally far more likely. Immigrants from Mexico and Honduras, for example have a poverty rate three times higher than white Americans. The only immigrants less likely to be in poverty than white Americans are those from Canada, Poland, the United Kingdom, Germany, India, and the Philippines. Needless to say, we take fewer immigrants from these countries than from the neediest immigrant countries. Poland and Germany aren't even in the top ten source countries, and Canada and the United Kingdom combined send us fewer immigrants than Mexico does.²¹

Some years ago, the political writer Theodore White said that “the Hart-Cellar Act changed all previous patterns, and in so doing probably changed the future of America. . . . [It] was noble, revolutionary—and probably the most thoughtless of the many acts of the

²⁰ Ann Coulter, *Adios America!*, pp. 15-16.

²¹ *Ibid.*

Great Society” [=a battery of utilitarian programs put forward by the Democrat Party at the time].²² Like Theodore White, I’ve come to appreciate that demographic change can transform a culture. This is a point Aristotle made long ago. Echoing Aristotle, Edward J. Erler’s puts it succinctly: “A radical change in the character of the citizens would be tantamount to a regime change just as surely as a revolution in its political principles.”²³

Immigration today alters culture because many, if not most immigrants, are more disposed to maintain their ethnic identity than to assimilate American culture. Many radical Hispanic groups, like La Raza (whose leader, Cecilia Muñoz, works in the Obama administration), have an explicit agenda to “take back” America for the Mexican people, a mission of *Reconquista*. The motto of the United States, *E Pluribus Unum* (out of many one) is a call for assimilation, without in any way expecting immigrants to relinquish pride in their diverse ethnic backgrounds. But many immigrants today champion transforming America in terms of the values of their society of origin than preserving America through assimilation. This is a prescription for cultural disharmony. Contempt for assimilation “undercuts the civil society as ethnic, racial, and religious groups self-segregate.”²⁴

The problem is magnified further when a nation abandons its own culture to promote multiculturalism, dual citizenship, bilingualism, and so on, and institutes countless policies and laws promoting and protecting the practices of balkanized groups and their infinite array of grievances.²⁵

I fear that America will experience dire political, economic, and cultural disturbances, if it does not stop the inundation of illegal immigrants at its southern border. I have lived long enough to already see

²² Theodore H. White, *America in Search of Itself: the Making of the President 1956-1980* (New York: Warner, 1982). Quoted in Mark Levin, *Liberty and Tyranny*, p. 152.

²³ Mark Levin, *Liberty and Tyranny*, p. 149.

²⁴ Mark Levin, *Plunder and Deceit*, p. 96.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

how illegal immigration is straining, if not breaking, America's political integrity, its economic strength, and its cultural identity. I hope my article has forewarned the people of Poland to protect themselves from the perils of imprudent immigration policies.

Myths and Deceptions about Illegal Immigration in America

Summary

The purpose of this article is to analyze several myths about immigration, especially illegal immigration, in America. These myths are as follows: Immigrants come to America to improve their lives, and in doing so, they improve the lives of Americans; America is a Nation of Immigrants; Immigration improves the national economy; Immigration enhances, does not harm, American culture. In summary, the Author points out that America will experience dire political, economic, and cultural disturbances, if it does not stop the inundation of illegal immigrants at its southern border. The Author draws attention how illegal immigration is straining, if not breaking, America's political integrity, its economic strength, and its cultural identity.

Key words: myth, immigration, American culture, cultural identity, ethnic identity, political integrity.