

Donald Trump's America

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Commentary

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It is a frightening place, Donald Trump's America is-a nation in decline, invaded by foreign criminals and welfare scammers, competing in a world where the rules are stacked against us and where our competitors in China, Mexico, India, and elsewhere are fleecing us.

In Donald Trump's America, Mexicans and other foreign workers are to blame for declining labor-force participation, unemployment, and stagnating wages among the native-born population, especially among blacks. "For black Americans without high school diplomas," his official immigration policy paper notes, "the bottom has fallen out: more than 70 percent were employed in 1960, compared to less than 40 percent in 2000. Across the economy, the percentage of adults in the labor force has collapsed to a level not experienced in generations." Trump either doesn't realize or chooses to ignore that declining labor-force participation by black men predates the influx of millions of low-skilled immigrant workers by several decades and that its causes are far more complex.

No matter. Trump's message is clearly striking a chord, and the chord is growing louder and the audience larger. The problem is that Trump is saying things that are not true, and even more surprising, he is taking wisdom and guidance from people whose ideological goals extend far beyond the control of our borders into areas that ought to horrify those who think he provides the path away from Barack Obama's America.

Illegal immigration to the United States has been a fact of life since Congress passed the first law restricting immigration on a broad scale in 1924. (Prior to that time, anyone wanting to immigrate could do so, with few exceptions-most notably Chinese and other Asians, who were restricted beginning in 1882.) The border with Mexico, however, remained porous even after large-scale immigration from Europe had ceased. By 1954, an estimated 1 million Mexicans were crossing the border illegally each year to work in the United States, mostly in agriculture, a number that would be equivalent to some 2 million today given relative differences in population.

The modern peak in illegal immigration occurred from 1995 to 2000, when as many as 1.6 million persons a year were arriving illegally. But illegal immigration has fallen dramatically in recent years, thanks to the 2008 recession, when many of the jobs in construction and other fields that illegal immigrants filled disappeared, and thanks also to enhanced border enforcement, including a massive increase in federal spending.

The federal government now spends more on immigration-enforcement agencies, \$16.2 billion in fiscal year 2014, than on all other criminal-law-enforcement agencies combined, including the FBI, Drug Enforcement Administration, Federal Marshal Service, Secret Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms. That spending has had a major impact. The Department of Homeland Security estimates that fewer people crossed our southern border in 2014 than at any time since 1972, and the numbers for the first part of 2015 are down 28 percent compared with last year.

The population of illegal immigrants living in the United States has declined as well, by nearly a million persons, from its high of 12.2 million in 2007 to 11.3 million in 2013. Trump's fixation with Mexico is particularly out of sync with what is happening. Mexico is no longer the leading source of immigration after having been so for nearly a century. Mexican immigration is now below replacement level, with more Mexican-born individuals leaving than coming here. Both China and India ranked higher than Mexico among countries sending immigrants here for the last two years.

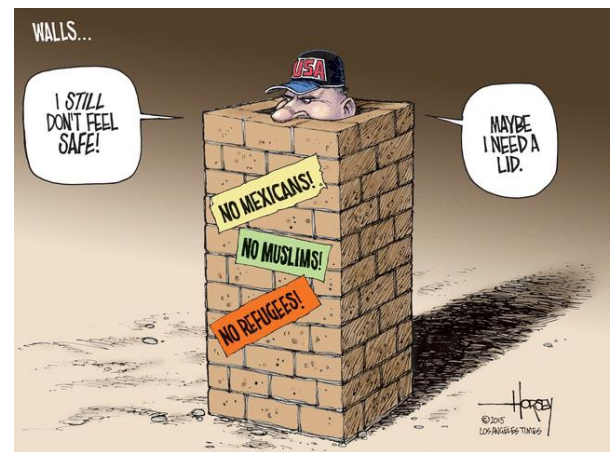
Nonetheless, many Americans, not just Trump supporters, are concerned that our borders remain penetrable at a time when terrorism is a real threat to our safety. How we best secure the border is a legitimate subject for debate. I have advocated, in these pages and elsewhere for more than two decades, that the best way to do so is to change our laws to admit legally those who will work at jobs Americans either cannot or will not fill, which would allow our expansive enforcement resources to be directed more effectively to catching would-be terrorists and drug dealers.

Until fairly recently, many if not most conservatives were open to the idea of expanding the number of high-tech visas available for foreign-born scientists, engineers, mathematicians, and the like, as well as creating a guest-worker program for low-skilled workers in certain industries. The 2012 GOP platform called for a "legal and reliable source of foreign labor through a new guest-worker program."

Trump, however, wants no such debate. He wants an end to most legal immigration: "Before any new green cards are issued to foreign workers abroad, there will be a pause where employers will have to hire from the domestic pool of unemployed immigrant and native workers," his policy states.

And he would halt not just green cards, which permit legally admitted permanent residents to work; he also wants to limit, eliminate, or make more difficult all programs that admit the foreign-born. He would force employers in the high-tech arena to increase so-called prevailing wages paid to foreign workers through the H-1B program, which admits 65,000 workers annually for up to three years and requires that the applicants have a bachelor's or advanced degree in a specialized field. The program already specifies that employers demonstrate to the U.S. Department of Labor's satisfaction that they pay wages that are as high or higher than the prevailing wages paid to employees in the same or similar jobs in the same geographic area, Trump wants to force employers to set the prevailing wage at the top of the classification scale, even if the job requires fewer skills and experience.

He also wants to toughen the rules for refugees and asylum seekers, eliminate funding for refugee programs, and end the J-1 visa program that allows



some foreign youth to come on a temporary basis as au pairs, camp counselors, and the like but also brings teachers, physicians, and foreign-exchange students to the United States.

Trump's proposals aren't new or original. He credits Alabama Senator Jeff Sessions with having "given us some great ideas." For their part, Sessions and his counterparts in the House, especially Representative Steve King and members of the House Immigration Reform Caucus, have been taking their cues for years from a small cadre of restrictionist groups, primarily the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), and Numbers USA. These groups and the individuals associated with them provide the bulk of testimony at immigration hearings chaired by Sessions and his counterparts in the House, provide the background and policy recommendations for proposed legislation and position papers, and marshal the shock troops to battle immigration bills they oppose, including a 2007 bill supported by the Bush administration. Opponents 'Tit up the switchboard for weeks, and ignited a debate that strained our normal alliances here and at home in our States," said Mitch McConnell on the floor of the Senate in explaining his decision to vote against the bill. "And to each and every one of them, I say today: 'Your voice was heard.' " McConnell was, then as now, the leader of the Republican caucus in the Senate.

There is nothing nefarious about groups from either the left or right working with congressional staff to draft legislation or lobbying for their positions. What is unusual about the alliance between the conservative Republicans in Congress and these particular groups is that they would seem to be odd bedfellows, given the groups' origins and continued ties to the environmental and population-control movements.

The modern immigration-restriction movement began with one man, an ophthalmologist from the Upper Peninsula in Michigan. John Tanton's interest in immigration stemmed from his involvement in environmentalism and population-control advocacy. He served on the national executive board of the Sierra Club, was president of the Planned Parenthood of Northern Michigan, and became national president of Zero Population Growth from 1975 to 1977.

Concerned that the only practical way to lower population in the United States was to restrict immigration, not just because welcoming immigrants increases population per se but also because immigrants had higher fertility rates than the native born, he founded FAIR in 1979 under the auspices of U.S. Inc., his nonprofit umbrella group. Tanton subsequently used U.S. Inc. to raise funds for and incubate all three of the most important restrictionist organizations now operating-FAIR, CIS in 1985, and Numbers USA in 1997.

I have more than passing knowledge of the groups. In 1988, I became president of U.S. English, another of Tanton's U.S. Inc. groups, which supported a constitutional amendment to make English the official language of the United States. Tanton hired me even though he knew I was a proponent of generous legal immigration. He did so because U.S. English was a lucrative source of funding for U.S. Inc. through a successful direct-mail campaign that at the time dwarfed individual contributions to Tanton immigration-restriction efforts. I was a high-profile critic of multiculturalism and bilingual education just off a stint in the Reagan White House and an unsuccessful U.S. Senate campaign; I was hired to bring added attention and legitimacy to the group.

The relationship did not last long and ended badly. I resigned after some 10 months when I learned of a memo written a year before I joined U.S. English that Tanton had circulated among some like-minded thinkers-an informal group he dubbed WITAN after some old Old English council of "wise men."

In the memo, Tanton worried about Hispanic (and falsely, Asian) high fertility rates, which he attributed (again falsely for Asians) to their Catholic religion. "Can homo contraceptions compete with homo progenitiva if borders aren't controlled?" he mused. "This is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!"

My departure spurred several prominent figures to leave the organization's advisory board, including Walter Cronkite, Jacques Barzun, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and others, and ultimately led to Tanton's resignation from the board and the group's separation from the Tanton network.

Tanton's network continued to grow and become ever more influential. Though the organizations and some of the leaders have tried to distance themselves from Tanton and his racist views-he once wrote one of his large donors, "One of my prime concerns is about the decline of folks who look like you and me"- the groups receive considerable financial support from funders whose primary interest is environmental and population-control advocacy.

The Colcom Foundation, founded by the late Mellon banking heiress and early Tanton funder Cordelia Scaife May, gave the three groups \$23.7 million between 2010 and 2012 alone, according to a report in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette. May's interest in population issues stemmed from her close friendship with the birth-control pioneer and eugenics supporter Margaret Sanger, whose portrait hung in May's home. Colcom's website says the foundation "focuses its philanthropic program on environmental sustainability, natural resource preservation, land and water conservation, and efforts to establish a sustainable population." FAIR has also received funding from more controversial donors, in particular the eugenicist Pioneer Fund, which gave the group \$1.2 million in its early years.

The ties go deeper than funding. Among FAIR'S current board of directors, several either serve on the boards of population-control or environmental groups or are major donors to those groups. Don Collins, the chairman of the FAIR board and a Democrat, also founded and still sits on the board of the International Services Assistance Fund (ISAF), which describes itself as "dedicated to family planning and contraceptive development research, with a singular focus on obtaining FDA marketing approval of a nonsurgical method of permanent female contraception."

The method ISAF employs in developing countries is the off-label use of Quinacrine, a highly controversial procedure that involves inserting the anti-malaria drug directly into the uterus, leading to chemical burns, scarring, and occlusion of the fallopian tubes. The Food and Drug Administration issued an injunction against Quinacrine's use in the United States in 1998, warning of "seizure, injunction, and/or criminal prosecution" and ordering the immediate halt to "all distribution of any and all Quinacrine" and destruction of existing stockpiles "under FDA supervision." The drug has recently been

approved for clinical trials in the United States, despite opposition from most reproductive-health groups and no interest from pharmaceutical companies.

Collins's wife, Sarah G. Epstein, also serves on the FAIR board as well as several other population-control groups, including Pathfinder International, a leading provider of abortion in developing countries. Epstein's father, Clarence Gamble, of Procter and Gamble fame, founded the organization, whose website declares that "access to abortion services is not only a public health imperative, it is also every woman's right." This is obviously a mainstream view-but not a mainstream view among many of the conservatives who also support immigration restriction.

Other current and former FAIR, CIS, and NumbersUSA directors and advisory-board members also come out of the environmental and population-control movements. Among actual board members, former FAIR chairwoman and current board member Sharon Barnes is described on FAIR'S website as "active in population, environment and women's issues," while Roy C. Porter is a "longtime supporter of numerous environmental and charitable organizations." Thomas C.T. Brokaw, CIS board member, was on the board of the environmentalist Defenders of Wildlife. Robert Gillespie, FAIR advisory-board member, is president of the Population Connection, formerly known as Zero Population Growth. Donald Mann is president of Negative Population Growth. Diana Hull is former president of Californians for Population Stabilization.

Though FAIR, CIS, and NumbersUSA at first glance seem to have a singular focus on immigration issues, their concerns about "overpopulation" and its effect on the environment can be found among their many policy papers and briefs with titles like "The United States Is Already Overpopulated," "Immigration, Population Growth, and the Environment," "Population, Immigration, and the Drying of the American Southwest," "Immigration to the United States and World-Wide Greenhouse Emissions," "Outsmarting Smart Growth: Population Growth, Immigration, and the Problem of Sprawl," to name just a handful.

These ties to environmental and population groups is extensive-not that there's anything wrong with that, as Jerry Seinfeld might say. But it is hardly the company you would expect Senator Sessions and his conservative allies to keep, much less to guide them in setting policy. It seems a marriage of convenience between anti-natalist groups on the left and restrictionists on the right.

Their focus is not just stopping illegal immigration, either. Senator Sessions, writing in the Washington Post, clearly embraces the view of FAIR et al. that legal immigration is the real problem: "Legal immigration is the primary source of low-wage immigration into the United States. In other words, as a matter of federal policy-which can be adjusted at any time millions of low-wage foreign workers are legally made available to substitute for higher-paid Americans."

Wisconsin governor and GOP presidential candidate Scott Walker has paid homage to Sessions as his primary source for immigration advice: "The next president and the next Congress need to make decisions about a legal-immigration system that's based, first and foremost, on protecting American workers and American wages," he told Glenn Beck in April. But it is Donald Trump who has pushed the GOP field into truly dangerous waters on the immigration issue, with calls for mass deportations and an end to birthright citizenship.

Mass deportations in the United States have a painful history, one unfamiliar to most Americans today. Raids followed by deportations removed more than a million Mexican workers in 1954 in "Operation Wetback," a derogatory term frequently used to describe Mexicans who crossed the Rio Grande border into the United States. But the most disturbing removals occurred in the Great Depression. An estimated 400,000 Mexicans, including both naturalized citizens and the American-born children of immigrants, were dispatched to Mexico during the period. Most of the effort to encourage and even force Mexican-born residents to leave was locally driven. Los Angeles paid transportation costs in 1930 and 1931 to repatriate Mexicans and their offspring, resulting in an estimated one-third reduction in the city's Mexican-American population. Several towns in Texas similarly pushed Mexican-born residents to leave, reducing the state's Mexican population by a third.

The federal government deported some 121,000 Mexicans during the early years of the Great Depression, using methods that the Wickersham Commission, appointed by President Herbert Hoover, described as "unconstitutional, tyrannic, and oppressive," including "forcibly detaining groups of people many of whom are aliens lawfully in this country, or even United States citizens, without any warrant of arrest or any other kind of a warrant."

Now Donald Trump and his followers want to deport more than 11 million people. Nearly two-thirds have lived here for more than 10 years, set down roots, and about half of them have children who are American citizens by birth.

Trump is sketchy on the details of his plan, averring in a CNN interview that, "We got to move 'em out, we're going to move 'em back in if they're really good people" through an unspecified but "expedited" process. We now have laws, regulations, and court rulings we didn't have in the 1930s that require a lengthy and expensive process before someone within the borders of the United States can be removed. According to American Action Forum (AAF), a conservative public-policy group headed by former Congressional Budget Office director Douglas Holtz-Eakin, removal of the 11 million illegal immigrants in the United States would cost between \$400 and \$600 billion and take some 20 years to accomplish. These numbers, based on the government's own estimates of its current capacity to deport 400,000 individuals a year, don't include the costs of building new detention facilities and expanding the immigration court system. AAF also estimates that the removal would result in a reduction in real GDP of some \$1.6 trillion and shrink the labor force by some 11 million.

So far, other candidates and the majority of Republican voters are not jumping on the deportation bandwagon en masse, and for good reason. When GOP candidate Mitt Romney called for "self-deportation" and the party adopted his message in their platform, the party did very poorly with Hispanic and Asian voters, earning 28 and 27 percent respectively, a number far below the historical average and the percentage needed to win key states. Nonetheless, a July Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll reveals that fully 43 percent of Republicans favor identifying and removing illegal immigrants-though a larger number, 53 percent, favor a pathway to citizenship or legal status. What is more disturbing is that the harder Trump pushes the issue, the more popular it becomes.

At the heart of the immigration debate is a fundamental question: What does it mean to be an American? The anti-immigrant rancor that is fueling Trump's popularity is nothing new in American history. A populist backlash has accompanied every wave of large-scale immigration, whether we are talking about German and Irish immigrants in the 19th century, or Jews, Italians, Poles, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans in the early 20th century. Those already here have always worried that newcomers were unassimilable; that they would never learn English; that they would steal jobs from the native born; that they would become a public burden; that they bring crime and disease—the very accusations hurled at today's immigrants from Latin America.

In fact, previous cohorts of immigrants did assimilate, and far more slowly than we now romantically assume. It took Italians some 70 years to catch up to other Americans in education, and many Italian immigrants never learned English. The data on Hispanic assimilation are far more encouraging. High school graduation rates for second-generation Hispanics have nearly caught up, lagging only 2 percent behind those of non-Hispanic whites. Indeed, over the past two years, all Hispanic high school graduates were actually more likely than their white peers to enroll in college, albeit more often in two-year degree programs.

But a major factor in the assimilation of immigrants' children, whether from Germany or Mexico, is that these children are Americans by birth. Now Trump and other Republican candidates want to revoke birthright citizenship. They include, remarkably, Senator Ted Cruz, who was born in Canada to an American mother and a Cuban father; and even more remarkably, Governor Bobby Jindal, the son of Indian immigrants who immigrated legally just months before his birth and whose own citizenship was conferred by the very birthright he wants to deny others.

Although both contemporary defenders and critics of the practice point out that the language conferring birthright citizenship can be found in the 14th Amendment, the practice actually predates the American Founding, having been part of British Common Law since the Middle Ages. Most constitutional scholars and the Supreme Court (in cases going back to 1898 and as recently as 2004) agree that the words "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and the State wherein they reside" mean exactly what they say.

Trump seems to believe he can litigate a change to this interpretation; but, again, most experts (among them former Supreme Court clerk Ted Cruz) believe it would require an amendment to the Constitution, which has little likelihood of surviving the required two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress and ratification by three-fourths of the states.

But even if we could easily change the conferring of birthright citizenship, should we?

Citizenship conferred by birth is uncommon in the world, though far from unique to the United States. Indeed, all but three nations in the Western Hemisphere grant citizenship to children at birth, perhaps not surprising in the New World, whose population is made up largely of the descendants of immigrants. The idea that all children born in the United States, no matter where their parents come from or the circumstances of their arrival, become American citizens at birth has played an important role in creating the melting pot that is America. Most of those who immigrated in the 19th and early 20th centuries came seeking economic opportunity, just as most immigrants, legal and illegal, do today.

Though many were eager to become naturalized citizens, they were not always quick to adopt American culture or the English language. German immigrants maintained German-language schools wherever they settled in large numbers throughout the Midwest and in Colorado into the 20th century. Yiddish-speaking Jews published their own newspapers, established their own theaters, and even broadcast their own Yiddish radio programs into the 1950s. Italians established *Figli d'Italia*, later renamed the Sons of Italy, which still has hundreds of active chapters today; the group published its own Italian newspaper until 1946.

The children of all these immigrants, however, moved into the political, social, and cultural mainstream of America as a natural consequence of their citizen status. When we talk about assimilation, it is the children of immigrants, American citizens by birth, who actually assimilate, not necessarily their immigrant parents. Why would we want to discourage that process among those who are going to make their lives here by revoking their automatic citizenship, regardless of how their parents arrived?

Trump and the other GOP contenders attacking birthright citizenship claim the law needs changing in order to discourage illegal immigrants from coming here to give birth to so-called anchor babies, a term designed to suggest that women are flocking here to give birth on U.S. soil to secure their own future legal status. The data belie the charge. Two-thirds of illegal immigrant women who give birth in the United States have been here at least five years, and 91 percent have been here more than two years. No doubt, some pregnant women abuse the system, but as Jeb Bush recently noted, the phenomenon of "birthright tourism" is more common among Asians than Mexicans. Wealthy, well-educated tourists, mostly from China, have come here in recent years to give birth—but the numbers are tiny, with only about 7,000 women who identify a country other than the United States as their residence giving birth here each year. And if America gains another few thousand birthright citizens whose parents are successful, affluent Asians, is that really a problem? Moreover, is it a problem that justifies redefining American citizenship?

If Republicans become identified as the party that wants to restrict citizenship, it will be not only a political disaster but a major rejection of the party's historical legacy. For 150 years, the party of Abraham Lincoln has stood for extending the rights of individuals and expanding who could be considered a citizen within the context of our Constitution. Republicans pushed for the 14th Amendment, not as a new right of citizenship by birth, which was well recognized at the time, but to extend that right to one of only two groups that had been excluded, African Americans.* Women's suffrage, which extended the ultimate right of citizenship—the vote—to half the population who had been denied it, was from its inception to final adoption of the 19th Amendment a thoroughly Republican enterprise opposed by Democrats at every turn. The 1965 Voting Rights Act, too, received broader support among Republicans than Democrats, with fully 94 percent of GOP senators voting for passage of the bill to Democrats' 73 percent. It would be beyond tragic if Republicans were to squander their party's historical legacy because they have surrendered to the thrall of the dark and false picture of America being painted by Donald Trump.