

Becoming American The Hidden Core of the Immigration Debate

By Stanley A. Renshon

Summary

The long-delayed and much-needed national debate regarding immigration is in danger of missing an essential point. The most important question to be asked and answered is not how much new immigrants contribute financially or what they cost. It is not even whether enforcement of our laws should precede schemes for a guestworker program.

The central question of American immigration policy is how this country can help facilitate the emotional attachments of immigrants and citizens alike to the American national community. Given the centrifugal pulls of multiculturalism and international cosmopolitans this is easier said than done. Multiculturalists want to substitute racial and ethnic identities for an American identity, while cosmopolitans think that emotional connections to this country are too parochial and nationalistic and urge our citizens to look abroad for their primary attachments.

This paper argues that our current *laissez faire* policy regarding the incorporation of citizens and immigrants alike, our failures to enforce immigration laws, and the doublespeak that characterizes our responses to illegal immigration are deeply corrosive to the fabric of the American national community.

This country faces catastrophic dangers from abroad and major policy issues at home. In such circumstances, pervasive public feelings that reflect instrumental, shallow, or ambivalent emotional national attachments are not only undesirable, but also dangerous. But what can be done? Feelings of attachment cannot be mandated by legislation or instilled by clarion calls to patriotism.

This paper spells out a set of proposals to help facilitate and deepen the attachment of immigrants and Americans alike to our national community.



About the Author

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America has begun a long-delayed and contentious national immigration debate that has been building for over a decade. It has been stimulated by the confluence of three critical national developments: the terrorist attacks of 9/11 that destroyed the comforting assumption that “it can’t happen here” while underscoring American vulnerability caused in part by an easily exploited immigration control system; the unprecedented numbers of new immigrants from diverse cultural and political traditions that have raised important questions about this country’s capacity to integrate them into the American national community, how best to do so, and immigrants’ interest in doing so; and the increasing awareness that the issue of illegal immigration represents not only a national security challenge but also a challenge to the very fabric and nature of American democratic life.

The new immigration debate has been crystallized by the Bush administration’s guest-worker program proposal that would “regularize” the status of millions of illegal immigrants already here, and provide a framework for their eventual citizenship.¹ That, and similar proposals like the McCain-Kennedy bill, have sparked fierce debate.² The Republican Party is split between those who do not want to reward illegal immigrants with an amnesty for their violation of American immigration laws and those who see an economic benefit from the labor of immigrant workers. The Democratic Party is eagerly anticipating the prospect of adding eight to 10 million new illegal immigrants/citizens to their voting rolls and have criticized any plan that does not include allowing most or all of the illegal immigrants here now to “regularize” their status and be put on the road to full citizenship.³ As often happens in such tense political standoffs, talk of “grand bargains” begins to emerge; in this case, 10 million illegal immigrants (and their families) become legal in exchange for as-yet-unspecified “enforcement.”

“Enforcement will be the key” to any new border deal, asserts one typical news story.⁴ The new policies will be “tough as nails” promises another grand bargain advocate.⁵ Past experiences with such calming reassurances should leave skeptical anyone with even an ounce of realism. The bilingual education program that is at the center of so much difficulty in teaching immigrants English in school started out as a measure to further English, not home languages, but was derailed and hijacked as it was implemented after congressional passage.⁶ Sanctions against businesses that hired illegal immigrants, part of the 1986 Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), also contained a grand bargain consisting of enforcement and legalization, but as the Manhattan Institute’s Tamar Jacoby notes, “Not only on the border, but also in the

workplace, enforcement of our immigration law is close to meaningless.”⁷

Moreover, IRCA stimulated more illegal immigration, as amnesties do,⁸ since the anticipation of future “status adjustments” is historically realistic and the incentives high. Why the current suggestions for a grand bargain would differ is not made clear. The current debate springs from one basic fact and one unexamined premise. According to a report on immigration policy from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, the only point of agreement among those who study, are affected by, or wish to change American immigration policy is that “the system is broken.”⁹ The clearest and most obvious reflection of this fact is the presence of an estimated 12 million illegal immigrants living in this country and the estimated 750,000 who enter every year.

This demographic fact leads many to a premise that has yet to be tested, much less verified. It is that illegal immigrants come here primarily to work at jobs “Americans won’t do.” I say this is a premise because, since there has never been adequate enforcement of our immigration laws, the United States has never really tested the proposition that legal immigration, now averaging nearly one million per year, will not satisfy our economic needs. It seems highly unlikely that the United States needs eight to 10 million farm workers, construction workers, restaurant workers, or gardeners (occupations that attract many illegal immigrants), or that if we did need more of these kinds of workers, raising salaries wouldn’t provide them.

While these problems ought to be enough to caution against the easy but untested claims of grand bargain advocates, I want to make a different argument here: That the focus on grand bargains that trade legalization for enforcement misses the most important part of the immigration debate entirely. The grand bargain — however much enforcement or legalization are in the final deal — fails to get to the heart of America’s immigration dilemma, what remains the hidden core of the issue.

Attachment: The Hidden Core of the Immigrant Debate

What is America’s central, core immigration issue? It is this: How is it possible to integrate the almost one million new legal immigrants who arrive here each year, on average, into the American national community? How do we help them to feel more at home here, while at the same time developing the emotional attachments that will truly help them think of themselves as more American than otherwise? Before the United States adds 12 million ille-

gal immigrants and their families to our citizenship rolls, stimulates the inevitable yearly increase in illegal aliens who will wish to be strategically placed for the next “status adjustment,” and adds them to the already record-breaking numbers of legal immigrants who arrive each year, it should seriously consider the “attachment gap.”

That gap is the result of centrifugal forces that have buffeted emotional attachments to the American national community by immigrants and Americans alike over the past four-plus decades. Domestically, multiculturalism has sought to substitute ethnic and racial attachments for national ones, while international cosmopolitans seek to transcend what they see as narrow and suspect nationalistic connections to the American community with international ties, including encouraging new immigrant ties to their “home” countries. All of this has unfolded as America’s major cultural, political, and social institutions and practices have been under relentless pressure during our decades-long culture wars.

The focus on the emotional attachment and psychological integration of both new immigrants and those who are already American citizens into the American national community is, paradoxically, both fundamental and novel. Immigration is a policy area that has been dominated by economic arguments. Do immigrants pull their own economic weight? Do they use more economic resources than they contribute? Do they depress wages for working-class Americans? The degree of emotional attachment that immigrants feel toward their new country is hardly mentioned and never measured. Instead, we rely on surrogate measures like self-reports on English language faculty (which focus on speaking, not reading or writing), education, or home ownership. Caution is merited on all these substitute measures since few like to publicly admit their language limitations, education is not synonymous with national attachment as even a casual perusal of informed punditry will reveal, and owning a house is not the same as loving your country.

The immigration debate also has had its share of hyper-charged political rhetoric. Is helping immigrants to become attached to their new country a form of racism and cultural condescension? Are people who voice any concerns about immigration policy “anti-immigrant?” Facilitating the psychological attachment of immigrants and Americans alike to their country is too important an issue to allow it to be sidetracked by baseless accusations.

The Emotional Underpinnings of American Life

Emotional attachment to the American national community is the foundation of U.S. citizenship, this country’s institutions, its way of life, and, in the wake of 9/11, a matter of national security. Liberals and conservatives alike believe that a commitment to the American ideals of democracy and justice are what unites us. According to the Manhattan Institute’s Tamar Jacoby, “every schoolchild knows we are a unique nation not by blood or ancestry, but by a set of shared ideas.”¹⁰ Or again, what holds America together? “The ineluctable common core,” Jacoby says, “is a set of ideas about how the American people ought to govern themselves.”¹¹

The political theorist Michael Walker has argued that it is citizenship and the fact that it is easy to become an American that binds us together.¹² It is possible, of course, to have the rights of a citizen but to feel little emotional attachment to the country that provides them. This is one reason why a “guestworker” program that allows foreign workers to focus on higher paychecks that can be sent “home,” takes American immigration policy in the wrong direction. In such cases citizenship is primarily instrumental, sought for the advantages it confers. Yet a community requires more than instrumental membership and a “what’s in it for me?” calculus to function and prosper. Emotional attachments provide a community with the psychological resources to weather disappointments and disagreements and to help maintain a community’s resolve in the face of historic dangers. Emotional attachment and identification are the mechanisms that underlie sacrifice, empathy, and service.¹³

Citizenship without emotional attachment is the civic equivalent of a one-night stand. The power of the American Creed itself rests on a more basic psychological foundation. That foundation is the set of emotional attachments that often are disparaged and very misunderstood. The bonding mechanisms through which “pluribus” becomes “unum” are the diverse emotional attachments that are ordinarily summarized by the term “patriotism.”

Patriotism is much more complex than the adages “my country right or wrong” or “dissent is the highest form of patriotism.” And, contrary to the widely misquoted and misunderstood aphorism of Samuel Johnson, patriotism is not the “last resort of scoundrels,” but an absolutely essential part of emotional bonding between Americans and their country. His oft-repeated quote referred only to those who misused the public trust, not to the virtues of patriotism. Johnson’s real, less reported,

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sentiment was that, “no man can deserve a seat in parliament who is not a patriot.”¹⁴

I understand patriotism or national attachment to include a warmth and affection for, an appreciation of, a justifiable but not excessive pride in, and a commitment and responsibility to the United States, its institutions, its way of life and aspirations, and its citizens.¹⁵ These attachments define the basis of our identification as Americans. We don’t often think about it except when events like 9/11 remind us that our attachments to this country are profound and much deeper than simply believing that democracy is the best form of government. And they are much more extensive and nuanced than the caricature of lazy patriotism, summed up by the phrase “my country right or wrong.”

The success of American democracy and its cultural and political institutions has always depended on these kinds of emotional connections. Yet over the past four-plus decades those attachments have been profoundly challenged, and in many ways weakened, by domestic and international developments. Within the United States, decades of cultural warfare over everything from the nature of families to civics curriculums have weakened America’s primary social, political, and cultural institutions. At the same time, multiculturalism has successfully championed the primacy of racial and ethnic identities over more national attachments. Internationally, the ease of global movements of information and people have allowed immigrants and citizens alike to be in much closer touch with their “home” countries — and allowed their home countries to be more in touch with them, primarily for self-interested reasons.¹⁶

New and old immigrants have understandable attachments to their countries of origin. The question is: How can the United States facilitate attachments to *this* country? The answer to that question does not concern new immigrants alone. These are American national community issues. Both old citizens and new immigrants have an important stake in increasing the extensiveness and depth of attachments to the American national community. And of course, the government, representing all Americans, has a critical role to play in helping to foster American national identity and attachment — a role it has so far declined to play.

If national attachments are the psychological glue that holds this country together, how is it possible to help develop and consolidate these feelings? Certainly no laws can mandate them. Nor can we halt or reverse the march of technology and international connectedness. The truth is that such feelings can only develop out of experiences that foster them. The question is whether we can help put into place experiences that do just that.

In this paper, I suggest six basic ways to accomplish this important goal. These suggestions take the form of affirmative steps toward some things and equally affirmative steps away from others. Among the former are measures to facilitate cultural, economic, and political integration. Among the latter are measures dealing with blurring the political distinctions between citizens and legal resident aliens, and between legal resident aliens and citizens on one hand and illegal aliens on the other.

Addressing both sets of issues is critical to ensuring a fuller integration of immigrants and Americans into our national community. It cannot be stated too strongly that these proposals are *not* put forward with the view that there is one kind of American, or one way to think about America to which everyone must or should adhere. Each immigrant and citizen will have to find his or her own entry into the vast array of ways to be and live life as an American. There are a million stories in the big city, as the old television tag line began, or to update it, 300 million American stories and counting.

Finding points of attachment between Americans, old and new, and this country’s history, institutions, and traditions so that immigrants can see how their lives and that of the country intersect provides one strong basis for emotional attachment and the development of an American identity. Government, as well as private and civic organizations at all levels, has an important, helping role to play in this process.

Psychological Integration Policies

Immigration policy reform proposals are not new. The Center for Immigration Studies’ report, *Blueprint for an Ideal Immigration Policy*, draws recommendations from across the political spectrum.¹⁷ For example, the authors suggest diversifying the immigrant stream, looking more closely at the issue of family preferences, and examining immigrant work programs as a method of increasing flexibility. These, and similar proposals, seem useful. However, they will not be my focus here. Instead I will focus on the particular question of emotionally integrating new immigrants and citizens alike into the American national community.

That concern is not new. Barbara Jordan and the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform used very strong and direct language to underscore the point that Americanization was not a dirty word and that it was, in fact, a key element of successfully integrating new immigrants into the American national community. The Commission’s report to Congress, “Becoming an American: Immigration and Immigrant Policy,” is an overlooked treasure of sensible ideas.¹⁸ Regretfully, little has been

done to implement the Jordan Commission's important insights. A 2004 study and policy proposals sponsored by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations contain a few useful suggestions on this issue which parallel the Jordan Commission suggestions of a decade earlier: to develop federal, state, local, and civic partnerships to help immigrants and to ensure that they learn English.¹⁹ Yet they also add some new ideas that are less central: streamlining and speeding up naturalization, disabusing American "misperceptions" about immigrants, and giving health insurance benefits to new immigrants. These suggestions do not seem to get to the heart of the issues.²⁰

In the years since the Jordan Commission report, the United States has demonstrated that it still is not serious about helping immigrants become Americans. Nor has much thought been given to how we can help Americans themselves consolidate their connections with their home country. The two are certainly related. If Americans have difficulty understanding and appreciating their country, how can we expect new immigrants to fare much better? In the post-9/11 age of catastrophic terrorism, this is a dangerous gap. The failure to affirmatively act in this matter is not primarily the result of public indifference; there is overwhelming support among Americans for integrating immigrants into American life. Indeed, what upsets Americans most about immigration, aside from the continuing surge of illegal immigration, is the sense that the traditional expectation of immigrant integration into the American national communities is no longer valued by some or expected by many — among them our political leaders.

Not all of the suggestions made about reforming immigration policy further the integration of new immigrants. Some feel that the burdens of becoming an American citizen are already too heavy, and they propose to lighten them. Some want to lessen, or do away with, the requirement that immigrants learn English.²¹ Some want to include illegal aliens in a new general amnesty.²² And some want to do away with the renunciation clause in the Naturalization Oath, arguing that you cannot legislate feelings. These suggestions, for what amount to the immigrant citizenship version of automobile EZ passes for toll collection, do not seem designed to foster attachment. On the contrary, they promise to further fracture the American national community and the feelings of emotional connection that underlie it.

This paper puts forward six general policy recommendations related to immigration and citizenship broadly conceived. It is, like its sister paper on reforming dual citizenship,²³ ultimately aimed at increasing the identification of immigrants and Americans alike with

an American national identity and the attachments to the national community that flow from it. Specifically, the recommendations focus on cultural adaptation, language acquisition, civics integration, and the difficult problem of illegal immigration. While there are numerous smaller and important ways that American immigration policies can be improved, these four areas represent the foundation, the bedrock of efforts to integrate immigrants into the American national community.

Integration into the American National Community

Like any tentative relationship, that between an immigrant and his or her new community is an uneven experience. The process normally begins with an extensive application for a visa. Increasingly, there is a formal interview. An applicant may wait many months, even years, before a permanent visa is approved. The person, upon receiving the visa, may enter the United States but still must normally wait for a period of five years before he or she can stand for naturalization. At that time the prospective immigrant must present evidence that he or she is of good moral character and has a working knowledge of English and of American history and civics. If immigrants are able to successfully present such knowledge, they are then asked to take an oath of allegiance in which former attachments are "renounced."

The process is long, but not extraordinarily demanding. English facility tests are not very difficult, nor are the civics tests. Immigrants may have to "renounce" their former allegiances, but there is no check whatsoever on whether they have followed through on this commitment. The length of the process, while frustrating, is a natural result of the enormous numbers of visa applications, national security concerns, and the workings of a large bureaucracy with varied and conflicting demands made on it. Critics call all of these difficulties "unwelcoming" and propose doing away with, or lessening, a number of requirements. The easier, the better, is their view.

Yet, so long as the United States is serious about retaining some judgment about the enormous numbers of people who wish to live here, the process will not be short. So long as the United States wishes to protect those already here, the process of inquiry cannot be shallow. The best it can be is transparent and understood. The United States must ask for patience and understanding from those wishing to come here, but a transparent and explained process is only the first, introductory step to what the government might and should do to help immigrants become Americans.

Cultural Integration: A Real Welcome for Immigrants

A real welcome begins before immigrants arrive in this country. The American government now maintains a “Welcome to America Pamphlet” on its immigration website. It covers some, but by no means all, of the basics of American life: social security, where to look for a job, and so on.²⁴ This document should be translated and distributed overseas to all foreigners applying for green cards. Videos could supplement this introductory America material either on websites or at libraries. More and deeper orientation needs to be done before immigrants arrive here.

What do many immigrants need most immediately upon their arrival? One could say orientation and help navigating the many complexities they confront. Those who arrive with high-education job placements waiting, or to take up advanced education, generally need less help with orientation. Others — the majority — need help finding a job, finding housing, and finding their way around. Generally this has been the domain of civic organizations — churches, advocacy groups, and the ethnic communities with which arrivals may already have some contact. The trouble with some of these organizations is that they are too few, too poor, and often not sufficiently attentive to the broader community interest in fostering attachment to the American national community. Government should join with a range of immigrant-orientated groups, on a non-partisan basis, to develop a nationwide network of hosting institutions in major cities and geographical hubs that could act as clearing houses for jobs, training, and housing as well as orientation centers. This would be an excellent place to develop an Immigration Corps — young and old people who give of their time and effort to help orient new immigrants.

Business also could be tapped, as it has in the past, to help new immigrant employees. This would include not only the very important role of workplace socialization, but also voluntary after-hours orientation to the wider society. Government-business partnerships

could be forged for this effort, and extra costs to businesses redressed with tax credits or rebates. This will hardly be possible if businesses continue to employ illegal immigrants, with few questions asked, and government turns a mostly blind eye to the practice.

High schools and junior colleges could also be enlisted. After-school, evening, and weekend classes could be developed for immigrants and their families covering a number of aspects of American life. This would help many immigrants understand how our culture works. Consider one such effort, the newcomer centers in Chicago, where in addition to academic subjects, “students also learn the ropes of U.S. schools: when to raise their hands, how to react to freshman hazing, what to expect on the lunch

menu . . . students learn the basics about a school culture, from lunchroom to locker room, that is alien to them. It isn’t unusual for a student from rural Mexico to go directly from a one-room schoolhouse to a 1,500-student high school that holds more people than his hometown. Cold milk at lunch might be new. So might coed

classrooms. Perhaps students have never used a locker. Maybe they are used to being lectured for an entire class and feel uncomfortable working in small groups.”²⁵

American students hardly think twice about these matters, and most do not have to: They grew up here. Immigrants cannot take very much for granted, and that in itself requires a level of adjustment that few Americans appreciate. The Chicago centers are focused on students and helping them to develop success in schools. Yet there are adults — fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers — who also would benefit from learning the ins and outs of American society as they gradually find their place within it. Macomb Junior College in Michigan, for example, runs a free twice-a-week class called “Living in America.”²⁶ The class teaches such things as how to get a drivers license, how insurance is handled in the United States, how to fill out a job application, how to shop in an American store, and how to make an appointment at a doctor’s office. There are so many things Americans take for granted in navigating our culture. Learning about them would make immigrants’ transition much easier and, as a result, make them feel more a part of this society and culture, a building block for an attachment to the community.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Federal, state, and local governments, in partnership with business, education, and civic leaders, should develop and help maintain welcome centers throughout the United States whose sole purpose would be to help immigrants and their families adjust to the culture of this country and its institutional practices. The additional possibility of setting up such centers abroad for immigrants whose applications for a permanent visa have been approved should also be examined.

English, English, English

It is difficult to imagine a more basic ingredient for feeling at home and doing well in a new society than knowing the language. Knowledge of English is so central to life in the United States and so obviously a key element in “feeling at home” that one hesitates to mention it. Yet, astoundingly, some argue that learning English is a “barrier” that must be dismantled. This makes no sense. Walk down the street of any city in Hong Kong, Germany, or India. If you don’t speak the language, the street names, stores signs, ads, announcements, building functions, and so on are lost to your understanding. This is even before you attempt any written or spoken transactions. Could you apply for a job in Italy without speaking Italian? Could you read a lease in Germany if you wanted to rent an apartment? A working knowledge of English — reading, speaking, and writing — is a critical element in easing what will always be to some extent a difficult transition.

The United States began as an English-speaking country and it has remained so despite having no official language policy and despite welcoming speakers of many foreign languages.²⁷ Between 1840 and 1924, two-thirds of the immigrants to this country spoke a language other than English. Yet, as the sociologist Stanley Lieberman notes, “despite efforts on the part of all immigrant groups to maintain their ancestral languages, their descendants soon contributed to the growing number of English monologs in the United States. The shift was rapid . . . and in most cases it was final.”²⁸ There are a number of reasons for this. Schools taught English, and occupations required it.²⁹ Yet, in the end, Schiffman agrees with his colleague Kloss³⁰ that the ultimate reasons are neither to be found in nationality laws unfavorable to other languages, nor in government policy or coercion, rather in “. . . the absorbing power of the highly developed American society . . . the manifold opportunities for personal advancement and individual achievements which this society offered were so attractive that the descendants of the ‘aliens’ sooner or later voluntarily integrated themselves into this society.”³¹

The same remains true today. English facility does function as a common bond and facilitates the connections between the country and its people. It underlies an understanding of, and therefore facilitates a connection to, the shared social and political values of the country and an understanding of them. A working knowledge of English is the foundation of a basic understanding of republican democracy. Indeed, it is hard to see how the iconic American Creed can play much of a unifying role if people don’t understand the language upon which it is built and operates.

At one time, government, civic organizations, and industry took this responsibility seriously. They no longer do. The original legislation for the Bilingual Education Act of 1967-68 developed by Texas Senator Ralph Yarborough was specifically designed to increase English facility. Ethnic advocates and their allies gutted the English learning provisions.³² As a result, the integration of generations of immigrants into the American national culture was slowed. Given the large number of immigrants who arrive in this country, both legally and illegally, every year and the diversity of their backgrounds, there are probably more foreign languages spoken here than ever before. In those circumstances, a common standard language is even more important to developing and maintaining a cohesive and integrated national community.

Historically America conducted its national, political, economic, and social business in English. The same is true today. Therefore it is a matter of central importance both on community, economic, political, and psychological grounds to encourage English language skills. The government could, and should, take the lead in fostering partnerships with colleges, schools, businesses, churches, and civic organizations to ensure that there are enough free or low-cost English language classes available for those who want them and that the classes are scheduled evenings, mornings, weekends, or whenever people can get to them. They should not be strictly tied to passing the English portion of the nationalization test.

As should be the case with welcoming centers, language instruction should be strictly non-partisan. The point of these initiatives is to ease immigrant transition, not to facilitate political recruiting. Furthermore, there is no reason to wait until an immigrant arrives in the United States to begin this process. Some countries base their immigration decisions on a point system with points awarded for a number of things, like knowing the country’s language. Perhaps such a point system would be worth considering. However, such a system need not be in place in order to encourage the development of English language skills before immigrants arrive. English-language schools could be set up abroad for those who have been given provisional visa clearance and await final approval. Their English-language classes could act as a form of anticipatory orientation for life in America.

Those who wish to immigrate to the United States and are in the process of applying, or who might do so in the future, could receive a plus factor of some sort on evidence that they have taken or are taking English-language courses. In helping immigrants to master English, Americans would be offering a welcoming hand in a manner that also gives immigrants the tools they need for a productive and independent life in the United States.

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It is an investment in the well-being of the immigrants who come here. Language acquisition and mastery is also a vehicle for helping to develop attachments — to fellow Americans, to what the country stands for, to its institutions, to its way of life, and to the national community more generally. It is not that immigrants will necessarily be grateful for such help, although they might certainly be appreciative. Rather, it is that a person develops attachments through experiences that are shared to some degree and in that process a commonality is established. This is very difficult if two people don't speak or understand the same language.

Given these compelling reasons to help immigrants, it is surprising that more has not been done. Perhaps some worry about being criticized for trying to “Americanize” — as if that were an act of cul-

tural imperialism and not a vehicle for the realization of immigrant hopes and aspirations. Perhaps the lessons of the Bilingual Education Act are still a haunting memory for some. Whatever the reason, the *laissez-faire* approach to learning English damages immigrant mobility and attachment.

It is important to be very clear here. This is *not* a suggestion for a national law making English the language of the land. It is not a suggestion that we have an English-only policy. It is not a brief in favor of doing away with bilingual education. Immigrants and others are, in my proposal, welcome to their languages. This is a suggestion that it is very important for immigrants to master English as well as possible and as quickly as possible. It is a suggestion that this country pursue an English First policy. However, if forced to choose between immigrants learning English to facilitate their entry into, and ability to thrive in, the American national community, and a commitment to maintain their native languages, I would opt for the former.

Hairdressers in Nevada: Spanish Sunsets?

One special issue that arises in connection with immigrants is the use of their native languages in the workplace and in earning government certifications that allow them to work and participate in American society. Almost all private and public sector jobs require knowledge of English unless a person is specifically hired for outreach to

specific language communities. So generally, immigrants who would like to maximize their occupational access and mobility would be well advised to know English. Yet, there is another arena of access and integration in the American national community. This involves government licenses, permits, and ultimately participation in America's civic system. Consider the case of Hispanic hairdressers in Nevada.³³

A number of Spanish-speaking immigrants were practicing professional hairdressers in their home countries. Naturally, when they arrived here they hoped to take

up the work they already knew. Yet the state of Nevada, like other states, licenses hairdressers because of the chemicals and dyes involved in the work and many immigrants failed a 125-question exam written in English. The issue

also had come up with licensing used car salesmen and plumbers in California, and increasingly has and is likely to further find its way into a number of state licensing examinations — as, for example, with drivers licenses.

Nevada previously had allowed exam interpreters, but accusations were made of cheating. The new debate in Nevada centered on public safety and fairness. One concern was that workers would be using chemicals and dyes labeled in English but be unable to read what they were using. Another was the fairness of not offering the test in other languages besides Spanish. In fact, it turned out that there were more Asian than Hispanic hairdressers. In the end, the licensing body allowed persons to take the exam in a language other than English with advanced (six months) notice and allowed an interpreter to be present — but paid for by the applicant.

The issue was framed as a clash among three values: encouraging and facilitating work, public safety, and fairness to all groups. We want immigrants who come to this country to become part of it by working, making a living, and becoming integrated into the productive work community. Yet the immigrants who wanted to practice their trade as hairdressers and other licensed professions did not speak English well enough to take and pass an English-language test of subject competency. The Nevada solution was typically pragmatic and flexible. Yes, you could work. Yes, you needed to take the exam. Yes, members of any language group could take the exam in their language if they provided a translator at their own cost.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Federal, state, and local governments should take steps to ensure that any immigrant who wishes to acquire or improve his or her English skills can do so without charge. English study centers should be set up abroad to aid those who are awaiting permanent visas.

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So, is this a perfect resolution? Not quite. Lost in the debate were questions about doing something important to encourage cultural and psychological integration as well as encouraging economic self-sufficiency. What if, instead of granting persons a license in field x gained with the language aide of an interpreter, the licensing board introduced a language sunset provision? The licensing board would grant a provisional license gained with the aid of a language interpreter, with the understanding that the person would have to retake the exam in English in two, three, or however many years was deemed appropriate.³⁴ Exemptions could be made for older immigrants as they are in the English portion of the citizenship test. Such an approach could be used in almost all cases in which language facility, not substantive competence, is an issue. It also could be easily accommodated in circumstances in which competency must be retested after a period of time.

Such a proposal has much to recommend it. It would honor America's interest in and facilitation of the immigrant work ethic. It would be fair to all language groups. It would stimulate the acquisition of a competency that would advance mobility. Importantly, by being time limited, it would encourage people to master the language in which they will conduct most of their lives in America's work and civic culture. And finally, in adapting such a measure the responsible governmental licensing agencies send a message in support of learning English.

The same approach could be used in the political system. The Supreme Court has ruled that people cannot be discriminated against on the basis of their language ability. As a result, bilingual voting machines, voters' guides, and ballots are becoming regular features of American civic life.³⁵ This is paradoxical since to vote you must be a citizen and to become a citizen you must demonstrate competency in the English language. How it is possible to demonstrate enough English sufficiency to become a citizen but not know enough English to understand the issues before you is one of the hazy mysteries of American immigration policy. What if a sunset provision were put in place for bilingual voting? New citizens must have a five-year residency (generally) before taking the citizenship exam and becoming naturalized.³⁶ What if, thereafter, they were allowed bilingual ballots for a limited period of time, say eight or even 10 years, with a suitable exception for older immigrants?

Surely a decade gives immigrants ample opportunity to learn English. No foreign language ballots should be given to persons born in this country. Critics will argue that this deprives immigrants of their political rights. Yet, as a matter of public policy, it well could be argued that the state has an investment in encouraging all its citizens to understand the language in which civic and political discourses are conducted. With rights come responsibilities as well.

Critics might also argue that the message being sent by such a policy is disrespect for an immigrant's home language. This might be an appealing argument to some, but it fails to draw a distinction between disrespect and preference for good reason. I can prefer A to B without

any necessary disrespect or dislike of B. Inherent in the disrespect argument is a demand for parity that would result in foreign languages being put on an equal governmental basis with the language of the country. The argument is disingenuous given the degree

of language diversity in many areas. It would essentially require the United States to be a multilingual country. It is clear that many advocates of ethnic language rights want others to learn theirs. It is not as clear that they are willing to learn others'. At any rate, if the integration of a national community is an important goal, splintering the country into multiple, government-sanctioned language groups seems a poor vehicle to accomplish this important purpose.

RECOMMENDATION 3

To the extent possible, English should be facilitated as the language of professional and public affairs in the United States. Other languages should be welcomed in those areas on a temporary basis with a view toward encouraging persons to make the transition to fuller English language facility.

Civic Integration

Becoming part of the American national community is not only a matter of cultural adaptation or language acquisition. It is not only coming over here with the psychological elements like ambition, determination, resilience, and optimism that help lift new and native-born Americans alike through the trials and opportunities of freedom and capitalism. New immigrants and Americans alike need to become more integrated in the American national civic community. For many new immigrants, it will be hard enough for them to culturally adapt, become familiar with the language, and earn a living. That is the commitment they made in coming here as working age adults. Yes, cultural centers and language classes can provide some helpful orientation to the country and its operation, including its political life. But the real focus

of American integration policy should be on immigrant children, and this means a focus on schools.

The civics curriculum in American public schools has been a battleground for 30 years, and remains so. Education, like other fields, has its enthusiasms and fads, but here the failures result in life-long disabilities. The battle over civics books and classroom content has been, and remains, intense.

Well-meaning and some not-so-well-meaning advocates insist that ethnic contributions, real and sometimes imagined, be given prominence, even primacy, in learning American history. Others, wanting to ensure that children never forget each and every historical and contemporary wrongdoing committed by this country and its leaders insist that critical material be repeatedly emphasized. Still others are equally insistent that Americans are insular and insufficiently tolerant and demand that we learn more about other cultures. As a result of these centrifugal pulls, students gain very little appreciation of their common heritage or why America remains a beacon for the millions who come here and many millions more who would like to do so.

Going back to the theory of patriotism touched upon earlier, immigrants find, or are given, little basis for appreciating what this country has accomplished, and why it might be worth supporting, maybe not in every single instance, but in general. Having little appreciation of its virtues, along with its stumbles, there is less of a basis for feeling that the country merits a commitment toward it, its institutions, and its way of life. After all, if our history, institutions, and way of life are essentially corrupt in some fundamental way, whether because of consumerism, racism, or other failures, how could an immigrant, or an American, possibly develop a commitment and responsibility for it? And if our identities are primarily tied to our particular racial, ethnic, or religious group, how can we develop a warmth and affection for our fellow Americans — those who do not share our skin color, country of

origin, or the other categories that are used to set us apart from each other? In fact, one of the primary lessons that American education needs to keep in focus is that we are all, or should be, more American than otherwise. We need a curriculum that comes to grips with our failures, to be sure. But more than that, students need to be reminded that no country is perfect, no group an identity island,

and aspiration, effort, and perseverance are the quintessential American narrative of which every immigrant and citizen has his or her own version. In this central fact, we truly are more American than otherwise.

Along with the themes that help immigrants and citizens alike to understand the ways in which they share a common heritage of aspirations and experiences, Americans need to know more about their own country. The state of civic knowledge in our public schools can only be described as dismal. To give just one reminder of that data, in a recent survey more than half of

American high school seniors thought that Italy, Germany, or Japan was a U.S. ally in World War II.³⁷

Lest this be seen as an issue affecting only public schools with their mixed record of academic performance, the results of a survey conducted at America's most elite colleges is instructive. A report by the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, a group that supports liberal arts education, recently asked a randomly selected group of graduating seniors at the nation's most elite colleges, including Harvard, Princeton, and Brown, a series of high-school-level, multiple-choice questions. The results were sobering. Of our nation's best students, 71 percent did not know the purpose of the Emancipation Proclamation; 78 percent were not able to identify the author of the phrase "of the people, for the people, by the people;" and 70 percent could not link Lyndon Johnson with the passage of the historic Voting Rights Act.

Yet 99 percent correctly identified Beavis and Butthead and 98 percent could correctly identify Snoop Doggy Dog.³⁸ Studies at 55 elite universities found that

RECOMMENDATION 4

Schools remain the most critical institution for helping young people develop knowledge, a realistic appreciation of their country, and an understanding of the common cords that link each of us to each other as well as to those who have gone before us. Affection for one's country and a commitment to it grow out of realistic knowledge — pride in what has been accomplished as well as an acknowledgment of what remains to be done. Support of this country, its way of life, its institutions, and its people relies on realistic knowledge about all these things. It means attention to the things that have united us, as well as those that have divided us. It means attention to the ways in which our institutions have developed, along with their growing pains. And it means attention to the many things that America provides, as well as those it still needs to. All of these matters will provide a fuller, more balanced appreciation of the United States and hence the basis for an attachment that may both honor it, do it justice, and improve it. This is a central responsibility of public education.

over a third of students were unable to identify the Constitution as establishing the division of powers in our government, only 29 percent could identify the term “Reconstruction,” and 40 percent could not place the Civil War in the correct half-century.³⁹

A survey carried out by the Columbia School of Law found that almost two-thirds of Americans think Karl Marx’s maxim, “From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs” was or could have been written by the framers and included in the Constitution.⁴⁰ Of the 50 top colleges and universities in the country, none require the study of American history, and only 10 percent require students to study any history at all.⁴¹ There can be little or no warmth or affection for, appreciation of, or pride in this country if citizens are ignorant or misinformed. There can be little informed support of the country, or its way of life, its institutions, and its fellow members if the country is covered over by a vast swath of historical amnesia.

Non-Citizen Voting

New York City’s Charter Revision Commission recently met to consider a resolution calling on the Governor to give the city the right to allow non-citizens to vote in local elections. A bill to that effect was also introduced in the State Assembly. Many may be surprised to learn that non-citizen voting is already on the books in several localities and is being pushed in many more.

Advocates advance many arguments for this change.⁴² It is only fair, they say, since non-citizens already pay taxes and can serve in the military; it provides an ideal way for new immigrants to learn about citizenship; it helps new immigrants feel more welcomed and included; it ensures that those who are not yet citizens will be represented; and it will help to increase declining rates of political participation.

These arguments seem reasonable. To advocates they are compelling. Yet, a closer look at each suggests they are neither.

Voting has always been a critical element of full citizenship. One can trace America’s moral and political development through the expansion of suffrage — to the poor and members of different religions, races, and ethnic groups. It is true that over America’s 230 years of existence, a few localities allowed resident non-citizens to vote. However, this was always a minuscule exception to a general rule that reserved voting for citizens. By the late 1800s, this practice, limited as it was, had almost wholly died out, and with good reason.

Voting is one of the few differences between citizens and non-citizens, and it is a major one. Citizenship

itself, and open access to it, is one of the major unifying mechanisms of *E Pluribus Unum*. When citizenship loses its value — and it would if voting were not an earned privilege — a critical tie that helps bind this diverse country together will be lost. Given the challenges that face us, this ought not to be done lightly.

Some will ask about fairness. One premise of the fairness argument is that new immigrants suffer from a benefits gap. It is often overlooked that immigrants from most countries enjoy an immediate rise in their standard of living because of this country’s advanced infrastructure — hospitals, electricity, and communications, for example. Immigrants also get many services for their taxes, such as public transportation, police, and trash collection. As for serving in the armed forces, non-citizens earn this country’s gratitude and, by presidential order, a shortening of the period before they can become citizens.

Moreover, no law bars non-citizens from learning democracy in civic organizations or political parties. No law keeps them from joining unions or speaking out in public forums. Indeed, no law bars them from holding positions of responsibility within any of these groups. In all of these many ways, legal immigrants can learn about their new country and its civic traditions. Voting is not the only means to do so, and may not even be the best; it can be done from start to finish with the merely pull of a lever.

Some will ask how non-citizens are to be represented if they cannot vote. The very fact that advocates push non-citizen voting undercuts the argument that this group’s interests are not represented. We depend on our representatives to consider diverse views. The views of legal non-citizen residents are no exception. The more such persons take advantage of the many opportunities to participate in our civic and political life, the more their voices will be heard.

As to those who argue that allowing non-citizens to vote will encourage more participation, the record of non-citizen voters should lead advocates to pause and reflect. Takoma Park, Md. — often cited as a model by advocates — refuses to ascertain whether non-citizen voters are in the country legally. Even so, their non-citizen voting participation went from a high point of 25 percent in 1997 to 12 percent in the next election and 9 percent in the election thereafter. The actual number of persons is very, very small, and it raises the question of whether it is worthwhile to abandon such an important distinction so that a few score people do not have to wait a bit before being able to vote as citizens.

Every effort ought to be made to integrate legal immigrants into our national community. Yet, isn’t it fair to ask that they know something about it before they fully

take up the responsibilities — not just the advantages — of what has been the core of citizenship?

Advocates of non-citizen voting do not discuss whether these new voters would need to demonstrate language proficiency or even knowledge of this country, as they now must do for naturalization. Would that requirement be waived? Nor have advocates said what they would do if many non-citizens decided that there was no longer a need to become citizens since they already can vote. We do immigrants no favor by giving in to demands for ever-thinner forms of citizenship.

Illegal Immigration: A Misplaced Welcome

“Welcoming” is a word and trait that appeals to American psychology. Americans are by nature open and generous. They are also, as a rule, pragmatic and generally orientated toward productive results. And, as the sociologist Alan Wolfe found in his classic study, they are also increasingly disinclined to make adverse judgments about others’ tough choices.⁴³ It is difficult for many Americans to be tough-minded when it comes to politics and life. We can see these characteristics in operation concerning illegal immigration. Americans do not like it. Yet, there is some ambivalence associated with those feelings.

For example, a 2002 survey conducted by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations asked Americans to name and assess a number of possible threats to the United States and some possible responses to them. Seventy percent of the respondents expressed the desire to “control and reduce illegal immigration.” Interestingly, only 48 percent of an “opinion leader” sample felt this way.⁴⁴ Along similar lines, a 2003 poll conducted by the Roper Organization found that 85 percent of Americans believe that illegal immigration is a “problem,” 47 percent believe it is a “serious” problem, and 68 percent would support the goal of completely halting it.⁴⁵ A large majority, 64 percent, was willing to support strict enforcement of laws against illegal immigrants that would make that status inhospitable. More specifically, 68 percent agree that Congress should pass laws requiring state and local officials to notify immigration officials when they determine

that someone is here illegally or has presented a false document. Additionally, a majority of respondents said they would support the passage of laws requiring verification

of legal immigration status for persons applying for a driver’s license (82 percent), opening a bank account (75 percent), or enrolling in a school or college (73 percent). Eight-seven percent want current laws against employers who hire illegal immigrants to be strictly enforced. Seventy-nine

percent would like employers to be required to verify the immigration status of those they hire.

Still, there is an undercurrent of sympathy for those who endure the hardship of illegal status for a better life. Most illegal immigrants are drawn by the wish for a better life and the hope that once they are here they will be able, somehow, to stay. That is not a far-fetched hope, as many past “status adjustments” and amnesties suggest. Moreover, the untested view that illegal immigrants perform jobs that “Americans don’t want to do” adds a certain sympathy to their status.

Is Illegal Immigration Victimless?

Some, like Yale Professor Peter Schuck, go so far as to call illegal immigration a “victimless crime.”⁴⁶ It isn’t. Some people believe that illegal immigrants provide a pool of willing and cheap workers for jobs that no American wants. That is not quite true. Not all jobs that illegal immigrants hold are jobs that no American would do. CIS director of research Steven Camarota’s recent work illustrates that literally millions of Americans work in the occupation categories with the highest concentration of foreign-born workers.⁴⁷ Again, the question is raised: How many Americans would apply for jobs that “no Americans want” if the wages were higher?

We are unlikely to be able to answer this question, however, so long as there is a large pool of unskilled illegal immigrants ready to do that work. The idea that illegal immigration is nothing to be concerned about appears in many places and institutions. *The New Republic’s* Peter Beinart complained about the Bush administration’s detention of possible or suspected terrorists after 9/11, claiming that they were held “mostly for minor immigration offenses.”⁴⁸ Apparently, lying on a visa application, overstaying the visa period, holding a job when you are

RECOMMENDATION 5

Non-citizens should not be allowed to vote in national, state, or local elections. Consideration should be given to allowing legal residents, with children, to vote in local school board elections. Immigrants should be encouraged to work within the political and civic organizations of their choice as soon as they wish to do so. This includes campaigning, contributing money, and other general features outside of voting that inform American civic life.

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not legally entitled to do so, and using false documentation constitute “minor” offenses.

When federal agents began background checks of 750,000 airline employees in the wake of 9/11, they found false identification papers in wide use by workers at airports as well as a number of people who had criminal backgrounds that had been concealed. A substantial number were arrested. There were complaints about these actions too. Eliseo Medina, executive vice president of the Service Employees International Union, said the raids weren't focused on terrorism but on immigrants. Medina said, “It's a disgrace. President Bush is punishing hard-working immigrants for the crimes committed last September by terrorists.”⁴⁹ Apparently, Ms. Medina feels that it is perfectly permissible for people to break the immigration laws, lie on their government documents, and conceal their criminal backgrounds.

Illegal immigration is most certainly not a victimless crime. It fuels criminal transport gangs. It makes some immigrants into the modern version of indentured servants. It subjects some to death in passage. It results in bribes to officials, which in turn corrupts government. It breeds an underground of illegal activity, including document forgery and identity theft. It allows exploitation of workers by their employers. It promotes disrespect for the country's laws. It creates enormous costs for the United States in terms of hospital and other service uses. It breeds a sense of insecurity among Americans that their borders are unsafe and insecure.

And it is dangerous. In the age of catastrophic terrorism, unverified identities are a source of potential disaster. Mohammed Atriss, a businessman who sold fake IDs to two of the 9/11 terrorists, was convicted on a lesser charge simply because he sold tens of thousands of fake IDs to immigrants and had no idea of the background or intentions of these two clients.⁵⁰ Illegal immigration spawns crime and underground criminal activities. Some of these crimes, like transporting illegal immigrants, may be more dangerous to the immigrants than to the country. Other illegal activities, like the vast underground of illegal identification and rootless lives, provide a pool of potential danger to the country itself.

The federal inquiry into 9/11 revealed many disturbing facts about the state of the American immigration system. The terrorists were smart and exploited every loophole they could find. One of these was the ability to get a driver's license in Virginia by having someone vouch for you in an affidavit, without having to present proof of residency in person. Several men were charged and convicted for helping some of the terrorists obtain identity documents. One of them was Martinez Flores, a native of El Salvador who entered the United States illegally in

1994 and worked as a day laborer in northern Virginia. His lawyer said that Mr. Flores was in need of money, so he helped the two terrorists obtain their Virginia drivers license documents.⁵¹ Living and taking part in a culture of illegality fosters more illegality with results that can be catastrophic to this country.

Institutional Interests vs. Community Interests

Many American institutions have been unhelpful in addressing the issues of illegal aliens. Some churches have set up refreshment stands along the paths that several immigrants take to get into the United States. They view their primary mission as helping people. Yet, they are also helping people contribute to the general set of problems noted above and below.

In the wake of the first World Trade Center bombing, the INS and federal officials realized that the terrorists had made use of student visas to enter the United States. When they set out to try and tighten this potential source of danger, schools were reluctant to get involved. When the federal government asked schools with large foreign student populations to report the collection of the fees they charge these students in electronic form, making keeping track of such students easier, a number of universities demurred. Their job, they said, was to be student advocates, not regulators. Dixon C. Johnson, executive director of the office of international services at University of Southern California, was quoted as saying, “We don't want to be a bill collector or policeman for the government.” The idea that university administrations don't regulate students seems counterintuitive.⁵²

Two years before 9/11, the INS asked colleges and universities to help them upgrade their background checks on the many foreign students who come to the United States each year. The schools complained that it was a privacy violation to conduct in-depth checks of applicants whose backgrounds raised red flags of possible terrorist involvement. They objected to scrutinizing students' bank accounts, parentage, birthplaces, and travel histories. The vice president of the American Council on Education was quoted in an article saying, “We, like most Americans, are very uncomfortable with any form of profiling, we are not law enforcement officers.”⁵³

Even law enforcement officers, however, cannot be wholly counted on in this matter because they perceive a conflict between their roles of enforcement and protection when it comes to illegal immigration. In Austin, Texas, the assistant police chief said, “our job is to protect and serve the residents of Austin, legal and illegal. It's not our job to deport anyone, or report them to

INS.”⁵⁴ That report continues, “This year, police joined Mexican consular officials to publicize the department’s ‘we-won’t-tell’ pact with immigrants.”

While it is unclear how many illegal immigrants actually come forward to report crimes, the police are caught between two conflicting obligations: to protect every person regardless of immigration status, and not to turn a blind eye on the breaking of the law. The issue, however, became much more complicated after 9/11. Among the many failures of the INS was an inability to track people who had been before a judge in an administrative hearing and had been ordered to leave the country. At least 314,000 simply then disappeared — absconders. After 9/11 highlighted the holes in the immigration system that had been exploited, Congress mandated a tightening of controls. A list of all absconders was put in a nationwide police database that local police can use to check on individual status when they are following through on an infraction. In theory, this law should only worry absconders, not those who are reporting a crime. In practice, the knowledge that local police were checking on violations of immigration law might well give rise to the same reticence that led to the “we won’t tell” pacts. Should the police then desist in checking for absconders? No; absconders have compounded their law breaking. What to do about the large number of illegal immigrants living in American communities is a somewhat different question. Certainly, a large-scale “roundup” is not a pressing need or sensible public policy. On the other hand, having police ignore evidence of law breaking while carrying out their public safety responsibilities doesn’t seem sensible or appropriate either.

Defining Lawbreaking as Legal

These are familiar issues to those in the immigration field. However, there is another issue that gets less attention. Speaking to immigrants at a ceremony at Ellis Island, President George W. Bush reminded those assembled to take the naturalization oath that, “Our democracy’s sustained by the moral commitments we share: reverence for justice, and obedience to the laws.”⁵⁵ One could ask whether illegal immigrants who begin their lives here by not respecting the immigration laws of the country are good candidates for citizenship. The view that illegal immigration is a victimless crime rests on a basic error. The premise is wrong. Illegal immigration is deeply corrosive and corrupting — of the national community; of trust in government’s ability to secure the country and enforce the laws; of institutions that turn away or flout such laws, that allow large anomic pools of unconnected individuals to be loose in the United States; and in others ways as well.

Borders and boundaries have deep psychological as well as cultural and political significance. Establishing boundaries is a key element in developing and maintaining a coherent personal identity. Psychologists have long established that separation and individualization are essential elements of human development. Symbiotic or enmeshed relationships are inconsistent with personal autonomy and independence. This does not mean that everyone must become their own island. Obviously, others enter into our lives, and we share ourselves in a variety of circumstances. Still, the clinical point is clear: The ability to develop and maintain boundaries is a key element of personal identity and psychological functioning.

Boundaries also play a critical role in the development and maintenance of a country’s national identity. For those living within and identifying with a particular geographical space, boundaries are one element of the commonality that underlies a national culture and identity. That is one reason why you can live in New Mexico or New Jersey and still consider yourself an American. The rules of entry from outside to inside this boundary are obviously important. Critics focus on the fact that at different times and in different ways the rules of inclusion in the United States have been biased against certain groups. That is true. Yet, critics have failed to appreciate that on balance the rules of inclusion have not been inflexible, and have changed periodically. One could ask, with equal relevance, how the United States discriminated against Eastern Europeans, Asians, or other groups, but also why they no longer do so. Both are part of the American story.

But critics miss a larger point about restrictions. No society can maintain viable national identifications and attachments without having some guidelines about who is or is not a member, and the basis by which the latter can gain entry. Boundary-less countries, like boundary-less persons, are recipes for severe identity diffusion. It is because individuals do identify as Americans and are willing to perform the hard but necessary tasks of citizenship that this country is able to survive. The question is not, therefore, whether a country has rules for entry and inclusion — all do. The question is how generous, fair, and transparent these rules are. On these grounds the United States does very well indeed. It admits enormous numbers of people every year. And it does so without regard to language faculty, education level, or economic status. No other country matches the United States on these composite criteria.

Aside from helping to demarcate here from there, a country’s borders represent the range of home within which citizens can expect their government to take appropriate and necessary steps to ensure their safety.

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Millions and millions of illegal immigrants breach that understanding and lead citizens to conclude that their government either cannot or will not effectively address and resolve this issue. It is not a good development for the American national community when its citizens view their government as either helpless or hopeless in matters that affect people's basic sense of territorial and personal security.

Nor are matters helped when public officials substitute their personal views for national immigration law and policies. There are federal laws that require illegal aliens convicted of crimes to have their immigration status reported to the Federal government. Yet, there are at least five major American cities — Chicago, Houston, San Francisco, Seattle, and New York — that have refused to comply with this requirement, making themselves so-called “sanctuary cities.”

New York Mayor Edward I. Koch signed an executive order in 1990 prohibiting city officials from reporting illegal immigrants to federal authorities.⁵⁶ In 2002, a large number of Dominicans living in New York were killed in the crash of an airplane taking them to a homeland visit. Grieving families expressed concern that if they traveled abroad to the funerals, they would have difficulty returning to the United States. Then-mayor Rudy Giuliani said he would issue a temporary waiver of the enforcement of immigration laws given the circumstances. Later, New York City Mayor-elect Michael Bloomberg said that he would make permanent his predecessor Giuliani's temporary waiver of immigration enforcement and extend it to all illegal aliens in the city. He said in an interview with WABC Radio's John Gambling, “Whether they're Dominicans or not, those people who are undocumented do not have to worry about city government going to the federal government.”⁵⁷

New York repealed its statutory resolution in 2003 after a woman was raped by five men, four of whom were illegal immigrants with past records that, had they been reported, would have been deported.⁵⁸ Immigration advocates argue that the new executive order would “erode any trust immigrants had in local policy.” How the selective enforcement of laws would raise immigrant or citizen trust in the policy was not made clear.

In Boulder City, Colo., one city council member said he thought undocumented workers should be allowed an opportunity to earn a living locally.⁵⁹ In another sanctuary city, a county worker was fired for turning over to INS authorities the name of an illegal alien. This person had been found to be out of compliance with the state's support laws and was a convicted heroin dealer. The fired worker had alerted authorities seeking this criminal that he was present in her office. The administrative officer in

the hearing said, “It is difficult for the average person to comprehend that the chief law enforcement officer in the county instructs its employees to ignore criminal behavior they observe.”⁶⁰

Several important issues are raised by these facts. Let's assume the city mayors and other leaders who support a de facto amnesty for illegal aliens in their jurisdiction do so out of sympathy and a wish not to make life harder than it already is for those who come here illegally. On the other side of the ledger, those leaders are sending a signal of acceptance and encouragement to illegal aliens — not only in New York, but also in the many places abroad where people pay close attention to these issues. That message is that if you make it to New York, or San Francisco, or other cities, you are safe from deportation.

Another signal is being sent as well. That signal is that although the United States has laws against illegal immigration, some of the country's highest elected officials don't really plan to enforce them. I'm referring here not only to mayors of big cities but also to Congress itself. When the U.S. House of Representatives was considering allocating money to cities to help with homeland security in 2003, a resolution to financially penalize cities that retained their “sanctuary status” was turned back 322 to 104.⁶¹ Understandably, many no doubt felt that homeland security was more important than forcing cities to adhere to the law on illegal immigration. Yet, there is unlikely to be much federal pressure against such state or local stances in the future because there has been little in the past. This sends the clear message that major players in the American political system disregard the law and thereby encourage others to do the same.

Consider the debate over drivers licenses. In New York, two state assemblymen introduced legislation to make it easier for illegal immigrants to get drivers licenses.⁶² The sponsors argued that allowing illegal immigrants to obtain licenses would allow them to have a documented identity and to lead less isolated lives. One of the sponsors is quoted as saying “current laws do not recognize that undocumented immigrants routinely operate motor vehicles on state roads as part of their livelihood.” The logic here seems to be that since illegal immigrants are already in the country illegally, are already working illegally, and are already driving illegally, the state should not enforce its laws, but rather should legalize their breaking of the laws.

In California, a similar measure on allowing illegal immigrants to get drivers licenses was touted as a way to help police identify drivers who are stopped and to encourage illegal immigrants to get insurance.⁶³ Traditionally, when police stop a driver for cause and find that the person was driving without a license or insurance,

they do not allow the driver back on the road. In the past, removing such drivers from their vehicles and the vehicles from the road was considered a way to increase the safety of the community.

These sets of arguments seem a somewhat novel interpretation of the Creed as expressed by President Bush at the Ellis Island naturalization ceremony, in which he pointed out that we are bound together as a nation by obedience to laws. The same applies to the laws that Congress and the president signed making it a crime to knowingly hire illegal immigrants. These laws routinely are not enforced. Investigations take time and manpower, and enforcement agencies argue plausibly that they have more immediate and important concerns in the wake of 9/11. Employers, hungry for cheap, reliable labor do not expend much time or energy checking documents and can legally argue that they, too, are victims of false documentation. Yet, even when both the federal government and employers have direct, easily obtainable evidence of immigration wrongdoing, they back off. In the wake of 9/11, federal officials began to send employers lists of workers' Social Security numbers that didn't match — nearly a million of them — indicating that false information had been given.⁶⁴ The government decided to scale back the program, however, because so few employers responded and so there were too few corrections to its numbers.⁶⁵

Illegal Incentives

Few people realize that the Social Security Administration tracks the Social Security payments of persons with invalid Social Security payments in separate accounts that can be adjusted if the person gets a legitimate Social Security card — that is, if the person becomes legalized.⁶⁶ Former Mexican President Fox asked that Mexicans who have worked in the United States, including illegal aliens, be credited with the money they paid in these holding accounts. Aside from the difficulties of ascertaining whether the person claiming a false Social Security number was the person who used it, there is another important issue involved. The ability to come to the United States using forged documents, including Social Security cards, and then to receive this money, would create an enormous incentive for more illegal immigrants to come here.⁶⁷ Being forced to forfeit such payments would clearly operate as a disincentive.

In truth, however, incentives are already stacked in favor of making illegal immigration more attractive, and the incentives are growing. True, immigrants who cross the borders, especially the southern one, undertake an arduous and dangerous journey. But once here their

economic lives take a turn for the better. It is true that they are often offered low paying jobs and are not able to rely on many of the protections available to legal workers. At the same time, even comparatively low wages and hard work may be better than the dismally low wages or no work in their home countries. In one recent three-month period, illegal immigrants deposited \$50 million in California banks.⁶⁸

Moreover, as noted, every immigrant who comes to the United States, whether legally or not, has the advantage of this country's infrastructure, things that Americans take for granted but that persons who live in many other countries cannot. Among other things they include such basics as running water, sanitation, electricity, modern hospitals with well-trained doctors, and free public education. These "basics" are provided by a tax infrastructure that illegal immigrants have difficulty contributing to because they often work off the books.

Even college education is increasingly becoming an incentive for illegal immigrants and their families throughout the country.⁶⁹ One of the controversies that has sprung up in a number of states is whether illegal-immigrant college students should pay "in-state" rates, which are appreciably lower than out-of-state tuition. In some respects, the former are subsidized by the latter and additionally by state taxpayers.

A 1988 federal law required such students to pay the out-of-state rate. Yet California, Texas, Utah, Oregon, Washington, and most recently New York adopted legislation that circumvented that federal law.⁷⁰ It did this by granting in-state tuition to any graduate of a high school within the state, regardless of immigration status. New York had not complied with the law until it conducted a review of it after 9/11. It then raised the tuition of illegal immigrants attending the City University to be in conformity with federal law.

One response to these changed circumstances came from the president of one of these schools, who wrote to *The New York Times* as follows: "Hunter College was one of the first City University of New York schools to ensure that no student's studies would be adversely affected by an increase in tuition charged to CUNY students who are illegal immigrants. When the tuition changes were announced, Hunter College immediately made available a generous package of grants, interest-free loans, and other payment plan assistance according to the individual needs of the students." In other words, illegal immigrants were now guaranteed a generous package of grants and other financial incentives. Since the pot of such aid is limited, illegal immigrants became, in effect, a preferred group for the distribution of financial support.⁷¹

Welcoming Illegal Immigrants — Revisited

Americans are a generous people. They are also people, as Boston University sociologist Alan Wolfe found, who dislike making judgments about others' choices.⁷² Illegal immigrants and their families force Americans at all levels to make tough choices that most would prefer not to make. There is little support in the United States for illegal immigration — less so since 9/11. Yet Americans retain an image of immigration that has much to do with its iconic place in American history. It is easy to imagine that the future will resemble the past, that immigrants will become part of the American community. Yet the issues raised by illegal immigration will not disappear. Long-term solutions like making the many countries that fuel illegal immigration to America more

attractive to their own citizens are just that — long-term propositions. In the meantime, illegal immigrants keep arriving at the rate of about 750,000 per year. Illegal immigration is not a victimless crime. The victims are American institutions and the sense of safety and security that is the basis for any well-functioning community. Americans, and many of their leaders, do not wish to be or appear ungenerous or intolerant. So, at a time when the country's sense of physical and psychological security remains shaken, the fact that some political leaders turn a blind eye toward illegal immigrants is not reassuring.

At a time when there are major questions about how well the massive influx of post-1965 immigrants is integrating into American society, several Democratic presidential candidates in 2004 called for blanket amnesties for over eight million illegal immigrants.⁷³ At a time when the physical safety of tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands of Americans is dependent on better knowledge of who is coming into the country and why, some institutions decline to do things they have defined as “outside” of their traditional roles. In doing so, they wash their hands of their larger community responsibilities.

Should there be another round of amnesties to “regularize” illegal immigrants? Should illegal immigrants be given drivers licenses? Should they pay less tuition? What do all these issues suggest about Americans' stance toward these issues in the future? If America and its leaders fail to act, has the country not essentially just become a new home to all those who can come and overstay or slip across the borders? What are the implications of that stance for the American national community and attachment to it?

RECOMMENDATION 6

Every effort should be made to discourage illegal immigration, including but not limited to: placing pressure on foreign governments to help stem the flow of such immigrants, making business and other institutions responsible for correct information about persons working for them to ensure they are doing so legally, exacting substantial penalties for non-compliance, and taking steps to expedite removal of illegal immigrants. It also is absolutely essential to remove the many incentives for illegal immigration, including, but not limited to: drivers licenses, in-state tuition rates, government disbursements of any kind, access to bank loans, etc. We must also make a real commitment to “no amnesties” and enforce national immigration policy — with limited exceptions for specialized circumstances such as natural disasters or personal tragedies.

These are all difficult questions. However, they are made more so by a failure to ask and answer a prior one: Why hasn't this country done more to stem the flow and make it less attractive to break our immigration laws? Why aren't businesses required to check the Social Security numbers of their employees and to require verification of correct information? Why isn't more pressure placed on the top send-

ing countries of illegal immigrants to help stop the flow? Why don't we have better tracking information so that we know who is in the country and whether or not they have overstayed their visas?

These questions lead to difficult, and perhaps tough, policies. Some people will not be able to come to the United States. That is an understandably difficult fact. Yet, we cannot have open borders — regardless of the editorial views of the *Wall Street Journal* and a few “progressive” liberal theorists. Open borders is a moronic and unsustainable immigration policy. So long as we have a fair, balanced system of immigration, the United States has gone a long way toward protecting its borders and its citizens and their communities from being the victims of what is assuredly not a victimless crime. So-called “grand bargains” like those envisioned by the Bush plan or the McCain-Kennedy plan are tempting, but don't work. They are neither grand, nor bargains — at least for Americans. Under these schemes, illegal immigrants will “earn” their legality by paying a fee or perhaps stopping in at their local consulates now maintained in many American cities before “returning” to the United States.

In return they will have access to all the benefits that U.S. citizenship can and does confer on them, their families, and their relatives. The benefits are immense, and all you have to do to receive them is break the law. Surely, other illegal immigrants will not be deterred by the prospect of achieving an unimaginable increase in their standard of living and those of their family by simply paying a relatively small fine.

Another approach is desperately needed.

On Being an American

Americans don't often think about what it means to be an American. Lawrence Fuchs, whose magisterial work, *The American Kaleidoscope*,⁷⁴ is a landmark in immigration research, writes in another context, "I recently read an essay written by a Massachusetts woman, who said: 'I was well into adulthood before I realized that I was an American. Of course, I had been born in America and had lived here all my life, but somehow it never occurred to me that just being an American citizen meant that I was an American. Americans were people who ate peanut butter and jelly on mushy white bread that came out of plastic bags. Me, I was an Italian.'"⁷⁵

"This woman came to her realization late in life," Fuchs wrote. "She had first confused acculturation to products with her identity. She then substituted for that mistake another, that being an American was 'just being an American citizen.'"

Americans live in a time when there is conflict between cultural and national identifications and attachments. Yet, it has always been an important matter for the health and well being of the United States to integrate ethnic and other national cultural affinities with the psychology, attachment, and cultural affinities of the American national community. National attachments do not happen primarily by accident. Nor are the best results achieved by a *laissez-faire* approach. This is especially true given the variety of powerful incentives both within and from outside the United States that all pull in the direction of weakening that attachment and those connections.

The United States faces determined enemies both at home and abroad. It will do so for the foreseeable future. In that truly dangerous climate, it is increasingly important that citizens become aware of their country — what it is, how it works, and most importantly, their relationship to it. Doing so will not be easy. Citizens will be swimming against the tide domestically, where many argue that multiculturalism and the primacy of ethnic group attachment is the preferred identification. And they also will be swimming against the tide internationally,

where liberal cosmopolitans of all types encourage them to look beyond their "parochial" national attachments. Along the way, they will have to endure the view that they are insufficiently sensitive or tolerant to "the other." They will be told they are not skeptical enough about America's professed ideals or sufficiently cynical about their realization. And they will be reassured that as long as they affirm their general belief in democracy, nothing further is needed.

Immigrants and their families, not understanding that these views are recent developments and having little relationship with the country's real history and development, will surely be perplexed. Their former countries will entice them. Their new country will generally stand mute rather than helping and guiding them toward becoming more integrated and attached in their new home. If that happens it will be hard, if not impossible, for new, or even older Americans, to connect their personal histories with the now centuries-old tradition of freedom and opportunity. They will, as a result, be cut off from an important source of attachment and connection to their new country.

Most Americans long to be united, to have a sense of community and attachment that transcends political, ethnic, racial, gender, and other differences that have been the primary feature of American public life since the 1960s. Americans want a president who will lead the charge to protect them in a world they now understand to be very dangerous. But they also want one who will reunite the long frayed strands of the American national community. Mr. Bush has proven he can provide the first. But he must understand that the most fundamental vision that unites is not a new policy paradigm but our sense of ourselves, all of us, as Americans. Attachment to the American national community is not just an "immigrant problem." A lack of knowledge, understanding, and heart-felt attachment affects all of us, no matter how long we have lived here.

The question of American national identity and the strength of our attachments to the American national community is, given our diversity, perhaps the most important domestic national question facing this country. Some dismiss these concerns as being based on "outdated theories."⁷⁶ Others urge Americans to accept other possible platforms for solidarity like "new diasporas, transnational civil society, and other identity groups" and the "thinning out of national ties" and argue that "it is time to accept an America . . . whose bonds are secondary to other forms of association."⁷⁷

For the sake of the viability of this republic and its people and institutions, let us hope not.

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- Answer:** Each year employers send their W-2 forms to SSA and a match is performed against the name and Social Security number on the forms and SSA's records. If the information does not match, the earnings are held in a suspense file until we can determine to whom they belong. Once you have obtained authorization to work in this country from INS, and you have applied for and received your Social Security number, you should contact Social Security to have all your earnings posted to your correct SSN.
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Becoming American

The Hidden Core of the Immigration Debate

By Stanley A. Renshon

The long-delayed and much-needed national debate regarding immigration is in danger of missing an essential point. The most important question to be asked and answered is not how much new immigrants contribute financially or what they cost. It is not even whether enforcement of our laws should precede schemes for a guestworker program.

The central question of American immigration policy is how this country can help facilitate the emotional attachments of immigrants and citizens alike to the American national community. Given the centrifugal pulls of multiculturalism and international cosmopolitans this is easier said than done. Multiculturalists want to substitute racial and ethnic identities for an American identity, while cosmopolitans think that emotional connections to this country are too parochial and nationalistic and urge our citizens to look abroad for their primary attachments.

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