

Americans First

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Feb 13, 2006 | 12:00 AM



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If you want to win at American politics, you need a moral theory. Fortunately, there is a concept that is both more practical and more attractive to American idealism than either liberal “multiculturalism” or neoconservative “propositionism.” I call it “citizenism” because it affirms that true patriots and idealists are willing to make sacrifices for the overall good of their fellow American citizens rather than for the advantage of either six billion foreigners or of the special interests within our own country. The notion is sensible, its appeal broad. Yet it has seldom been explicitly articulated.

Polls consistently show that the public is outraged by illegal immigration and uneasy about the high rate of legal immigration. For example, in a CBS News poll last October, 75 percent said the government was “not doing enough” to keep out illegal aliens, while 15 percent were satisfied and merely 4 percent thought efforts were too restrictive.

Yet legislative action has been limited to the middle of each decade, when Congress passes immigration “reforms” that ultimately do nothing. The 1986 compromise—an amnesty for current illegal aliens combined with sanctions on lawbreaking employers to prevent future illegal immigration—looked fair on paper, but enforcement quickly evaporated as firms complained to their congressmen. Similarly, the damp squib of 1996 legislation did nothing significant to slow the influx. Now, 2006 may well bring more of the same unless we publicize a counter-philosophy that our laws should be biased toward our own citizenry.

In our supposedly democratic system, the will of the people on immigration has been consistently thwarted because America's elites on both the Left and Right like the current lack of enforcement. A 2002 poll by the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations found that 60 percent of Americans consider the present level of entry to be a "critical threat to the vital interests of the United States," compared with only 14 percent of prominent Americans. Immigration provides corporations with cheap workers, the upper middle class with off-the-books servants, Democratic political machines with votes, and ethnic activists with careers.

How do they keep winning? The articulate and affluent who profit from illegal immigration look down their noses at anyone who wants to reduce it. They don't debate dissenters; they dismiss them. Their most effective ploy has been to insinuate that only shallow people think deeply about immigration. The more profound sort of intellect, the fashionable imply, displays an insouciant heedlessness about the long-term impact of immigration.

Yet the well-educated and well-to-do aren't expected to subject their own children to the realities of living among the diverse. They search out homes removed by distance or doormen from concentrations of illegal aliens—although not so far that the immigrants can't come and clean their houses tax-free. As our Ascendancy of the Sensitive sees it, that their views are utterly contradicted by how they order their daily lives is proof not of their hypocrisy but of how elevated their thinking is.

This doesn't mean that the white elites view minorities as their equals. Far from it. Instead, they can't conceive of them as competition. Nobody from Chiapas is going to take my job. Status competition in the upper reaches of American life still largely consists of whites trying to claw their way to the top over other whites, who, as an example, make up 99 percent of the Fortune 500 CEOs.

That's why the media treats the outsourcing of hundreds of thousands of white-collar jobs to English-speaking, high-IQ Indians as a respectable cause for alarm, but not the insourcing of tens of millions of immigrants to perform blue-collar and servile jobs.

Immigration policy, by its very nature, is about discriminating, about selecting whom we should admit and whom we should keep out. It is one of the fundamental responsibilities of our elected representatives because if they don't decide, inevitably some private interest is going to decide who gets in.

Of the five billion foreigners who live in countries with average per capita GDPs lower than Mexico's, how many would like to move to a First World country? The Mexican government recently estimated that one-sixth of all Mexicans now live in the United States, and a poll by the Pew Hispanic Center found that over 40 percent of the 106 million Mexicans left in Mexico wish to follow them here. Without government limits on immigration, the population of America

would balloon by hundreds of millions, plateauing only when life here became as miserable as in the Third World.

With countless millions hoping to immigrate to America, our policy could be to choose those applicants whose arrival would most benefit existing citizens. One imperfect but obvious way would be to estimate how much more immigrants are likely to pay in taxes than they cost in government spending. A 1997 National Academy of Sciences study found that immigrants with less than a high-school education each cost the taxpayers \$90,000 net over their lifetimes and high-school graduates cost \$30,000. But immigrants with a college degree or more brought a net benefit to the Treasury of \$100,000.

Yet for a couple of decades, the government has been handing out 50,000 green cards annually via its Diversity Visa Lottery, for which it receives up to 10 million applications, and those are just from countries not represented among the top 15 sources of immigrants. You might think this would be a great opportunity to skim the cream off the top. Yet the federal government simply accepts applicants at random, because choosing would be discriminatory.

Of course, our elites aren't against being personally selected themselves for higher-status positions. Indeed, they compete fiercely to have their children admitted to the most exclusive schools. In the bestselling novel *The Nanny Diaries*, the wealthy Manhattan mother hires a developmental consultant to evaluate nanny's prepping of four-year-old Grayer for the grueling pre-school application process. The expert grills the servant with questions such as, "How many bilingual meals are you serving him a week? ... And you are attending the Guggenheim on what basis?" Shocked to learn that nanny is letting little Grayer do the kinds of things four-year-olds like to do, the consultant concludes, "I have to question whether you're leveraging your assets to escalate Grayer's performance."

What is left out of the novel might be even funnier: all toddlers aiming for prestigious private nursery schools in New York City must take the 60-75 minute Wechsler IQ test administered by the Educational Records Bureau for \$375. Yet their private obsession with their children's IQ hasn't stopped the Manhattan media mafia, ever since the Bell Curve brouhaha, from publicly denouncing IQ testing as a racist and discredited concept.

The typical white intellectual considers himself superior to ordinary white folks for two contradictory reasons. First, he constantly proclaims his belief in human equality, but they don't. Second, he has a high IQ, but they don't.

This anti-discrimination ideology does not mean liberals refrain from discriminating among people in private, which would be impossible. Instead, it simply implies that to discuss in public how the choices among individuals should be made and what their consequences might be would be in the worst possible taste.

Decisions over what Lenin aptly described as the key questions of “Who? Whom?” continue to be made, of course, but by special interests in private. Owners of large farms and slaughterhouses, for instance, continue to recruit illegal aliens, recent immigrants bring over in-laws under “family reunification” rules, and foreigners decide for themselves to sneak into America. The outcome is an extreme degree of discrimination in favor of vested interests.

Neoconservatives have long claimed to dissent from this reigning multiculturalist orthodoxy by advocating a philosophy of immigration that observers have dubbed propositionism. The neocons argue that immigrants should be admitted based on their current—or eventual—assent to the propositions underlying the United States government, such as “All men are created equal.” But the neocons have failed to answer numerous questions about how their philosophy would work.

If American values are rare, do we really want to deplete the rest of the world of the few people who agree with us? In many Third World countries, a “brain drain” saps medical care and economic progress. Do we want to be also responsible for “proposition attrition?”

On the other hand, what if agreement with American propositions is as common as the neoconservatives have claimed in trying to justify our Mesopotamian misadventure? President Bush has asserted that most Iraqis share our fundamental political values. If that’s true of the furious Iraqis, who are notorious even among other Arabs for self-destructive lunacy, then how many billions of other foreigners qualify to move to America? How then does propositionism help us choose among the hundreds of millions who want to immigrate?

And exactly whom would the propositionists keep out, other than the most fanatical Muslim fundamentalists? With the exception of a handful of refugee dissidents, the vast majority of immigrants to America are in it for the money and are willing to mouth whatever platitudes would be required to get in.

Finally, there’s an insidiously Jacobin implication to propositionism. If believing in neoconservative theories should make anyone in the world eligible for immigration, what should disbelieving in them make thought criminals like you and me? Candidates for deportation? For the guillotine?

Ultimately, propositionism seems less like a well thought-through philosophy and more like ethnocentric nostalgia, an intellectualized exercise in ancestor-worship. Emotionally, the neocons abhor asking tough questions about today’s immigrants because they see that as the equivalent of asking tough questions about their own Ellis Island immigrant forebears and, thus, about themselves.

Fortunately, in America, citizenship is not an ideological category but a legal one. And emphasizing citizenship offers us a functional, yet idealistic, alternative to the special-interest abuses of multiculturalism and the incoherence of propositionism. Citizenism calls upon Americans to favor the welfare, even at some cost to ourselves, of our current fellow citizens over that of foreigners and internal factions.

Nor does citizenism suffer the fatal paradox dooming the white nationalism advocated by Jared Taylor and others who encourage whites to get down and mud-wrestle with the Al Sharptons of the world for control of the racial spoils system. Unfortunately for Taylor's movement, white Americans don't want, as he recommends, to act like the rest of the world; they want to act like white Americans. They believe on the whole in individualism rather than tribalism, national patriotism rather than ethnic loyalty, meritocracy rather than nepotism, nuclear families rather than extended clans, law and fair play rather than privilege, corporations of strangers rather than mafias of relatives, and true love rather than the arranged marriages necessary to keep ethnic categories clear-cut.

Citizenism is patriotism understood not as shouting that America is the best but as wanting the best for Americans.

The pride of Americans in their country is being exploited by those promoting mass immigration, who tell us that having our country fill up with foreigners proves we're the most desirable place to live. In daily life, though, we recognize that the most prestigious places, such as Harvard, are not the most crowded but the ones with the longest lines trying to get in. For instance, the Augusta National Golf Club reaffirmed its status as the top country club by forcing Bill Gates, the nation's richest man, to cool his heels on its waiting list for quite a few years before finally admitting him.

It's important to note that citizenism applies to present citizens, "to ourselves and our Posterity" as the Preamble to the Constitution says. In this, the demands of citizenism are analogous to the fiduciary duty of corporate managers.

When I was getting an MBA many years ago, I was the favorite of an acerbic old finance professor because he could count on me to blurt out all the stupid misconceptions to which overconfident students are prone. One day he asked the class: "If you were running a publicly traded company, would it be acceptable for you to create new stock and sell it for less than it was worth?"

"Sure," I smugly announced. "Our legal duty is to maximize our stockholders' wealth. While selling the stock for less than it's worth would harm our present shareholders, it would benefit our new shareholders who buy the underpriced stock, so it all comes out in the wash. Right?"

“Wrong!” He thundered. “Your obligation is to your current shareholders, not to somebody who might buy the stock in the future.”

That same logic applies to the valuable right to live in America. Just as the managers of a public company have a responsibility to the existing stockholders not to diminish the value of their shares by selling new ones too cheaply to outsiders, our politicians have a moral obligation to the current citizens and their descendents to preserve the scarcity value of their right to live in America.

The American people’s traditional patrimony of relatively high wages and low land prices, the legacy of a lightly populated landscape, has made this a blessedly middle-class country. Uncontrolled immigration, however, by driving up the supply of labor and the demand for housing is importing Latin American levels of inequality into immigrant-inundated states such as California.

Unskilled illegal immigrants pound down the wages of those of our fellow American citizens least able to afford the competition. For example, the wages of slaughterhouse workers today are barely half what they were two decades ago, even without adjusting for inflation. By cutting pay for the worst jobs, illegal immigrants have made honest work less appealing to many citizens, especially young African-American males, too many of whom have dropped out of the workforce and into the lumpenproletariat world of crime. That’s bad for both black Americans and for our country as a whole.

One subtle advantage of citizenism is there would be less need for the politically correct censorship to “celebrate diversity,” which has become such a blight on free speech in America. We would no longer feel so obliged to browbeat each other into claiming that other citizens are exactly the same in their behavior as we are. That constant lying becomes morally irrelevant because under citizenism, the duty toward solidarity means that the old saying “he’s a son of a bitch but he’s our son of a bitch” turns into a moral precept.

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