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# **Immigration Liberalization in the United States and Beyond**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Although it is known as a country of immigrants, immigration has always been a controversial issue in the United States. Despite being a well-discussed topic for centuries, many citizens still suffer from false assumptions about immigration. The objective of this research was to investigate the impacts of immigration liberalization and to address commonly held assumptions about the impact of immigration. Both pro and anti-immigration literature was examined, with a focus on free market economics and the moral impacts of immigration policy. It was determined that liberalizing immigration fits within both left and right-leaning ideologies in the American political spectrum. Free migration is shown to be a crucial aspect of free market policies, although right-leaning groups who promote the economic philosophy often ignore it. The often-misunderstood secondary or long run economic benefits of immigration liberalization are explained, with evidence given regarding immigration's positive effects on economic growth. Immigration liberalization is also shown to be crucial to human rights, as it provides people with the freedom to work where their labor is demanded. This gives impoverished immigrants a real chance to improve their standards of living as well as those of their family members living in their native countries. More open borders are also explained as a way to help spur economic growth in underdeveloped countries. For these reasons, immigration liberalization fits into many progressively liberal agendas. Rebuttals to the arguments of anti-immigration groups are also provided. Finally, policy recommendations are given that consider both pro and anti-immigration arguments. It is suggested that developed countries, with a focus on the United States, liberalize their immigration policies by letting more

immigrants into the country to match their economies' demand for their labor. The findings of the paper are significant to society at large because they help to show that the economic and moral benefits of immigration liberalization far outweigh the apparent problems that many developed country citizens associate with immigration.

## INTRODUCTION

"Few of their children learn English...The signs in our streets have inscriptions in both languages...Unless the stream of their importation could be turned away they will soon outnumber us...and even our government will become precarious," although this sounds as if it could have been said by any number of today's right-wing politicians regarding Latino immigrants, these are actually the words of Benjamin Franklin in the 1750's. Franklin wasn't referring to Latinos, but instead to German immigrants. Ironically, many of these people were the ancestors of today's politicians who use the same anti-immigrant rhetoric that was used by Franklin 250 years ago (Franklin par. 10).

Anti-immigrant sentiment is nothing new in this country of immigrants; since its foundation Americans have been trying to keep others out because of fears they will take jobs and benefits, depress wage, and ruin the country's culture. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century Scots and Irishmen were said to be drunks with allegiances to foreign lands. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Germans and Italians were thought to have too many children that would be a drain on American prosperity. Eastern Europeans were thought to bring crime, poverty and ethnic ghettos. In the 1880's racist campaigns led to exclusionary laws that kept out Asians and in the 1920's these policies were extended to include restrictions on the entry of "darker" Europeans; Italians, Greeks, Poles and Russian Jews (Guskin & Wilson19). After the Great Depression it was Mexican migrant workers that faced the anti-immigrant backlash. These migrant workers had initially been brought into the country by U.S. Department of Labor temporary worker programs, which the agricultural industry heavily lobbied for as a way to address worker shortages. The program, known as the "*bracero* program," allowed over 200,000 Mexican workers to legally enter the country to work by 1953. However, these immigrants were soon blamed for taking jobs from natives and draining public services, just as their counterparts from the past and present. In 1954, the U.S. government began what it called Operation Wetback, a program aimed at deporting some of the very same

*braceros* brought into the country to work during shortages. Federal agents combed Mexican-American neighborhood looking for anyone who “looked Mexican,” asking them for documentation and deporting those who did not have it (Guskin & Wilson 111).

Although this practice seems blatantly racist, it has been resumed as a 21<sup>st</sup> century policy by the political right in United States. New laws have been passed in Arizona and Alabama that aim to curb illegal immigration based on the same reasoning that has been used in the country for over 100 years. Law enforcement agencies in these states now have the power to arrest and detain *anyone* they think looks like an illegal immigrant, leaving substantial room for racial profiling (Summers par. 2). Another hardline stance found in Alabama law is that it is now illegal to transport, harbor or rent property to illegal immigrants making it possible for the child of an illegal immigrant to be arrested for giving his or her parent a ride (Summers par. 4). Laws like these don’t just affect illegal immigrants; they affect legal ones as well. In fact, Alabama’s new law has led some to suggest that Latinos here legally are no longer being treated as citizens, but instead as suspects (Editorial: Alabama...).

When looking at the melting pot that is America today, and the contributions that these previously persecuted people have made, the anti-immigrant fears of the past seem shortsighted and prejudice. Yet today many Americans want to impose similar restrictive policies on immigrants that want to come to America for the same reasons as past immigrants: opportunity and freedom. However, the reasons for denying free immigration seem to be based on xenophobia, racism and incorrect assumptions about economics. Both the political left and right need to see that freer immigration does indeed fall in line with their ideologies. For the right, free immigration should be recognized as a free market, laissez-faire policy that is the most efficient way to create wealth. For the left, free immigration is a way to help the poor; giving immigrants the chance to come to developing countries changes their lives for the better. It is in the best interest of both the ideological right and left in developed countries like the United States to realize the economic and moral imperatives of implementing more liberal immigration policies. These policies will not only benefit immigrant-receiving countries, but the entire global community.

## IMMIGRATION LIBERALIZATION AS A FREE MARKET POLICY

Humanity's history of anti-immigrant sentiment is no surprise to evolutionary psychologists. Many of them assert that anti-immigrant instincts are wired into our brain; they were naturally selected for as we evolved over thousands of years. Paul H. Rubin in his article "Evolution, Immigration and Trade" writes, "Our ancestors lived in relatively small groups in which everyone knew everyone else. Our minds are adapted to deal with populations of that size. Our ancestors made strong distinctions between members of the in-group and outsiders" (par. 3). In a world in which people lived in small bands, the arrival of "immigrants" meant a loss for the other members of the band. This is known as a zero-sum game: if one human gains, then another must lose. However, in today's world circumstances and resources are not as fixed as they were for our ancestors. As economists argue, contrary to our evolutionary intuition, not everything is a zero-sum game. Voluntary trade, for example, is a positive sum game; it benefits both parties and if it doesn't it won't occur. Immigration, as Rubin argues, is the same: "immigrants coming here to exchange their labor for money that they exchange for the products of other people labor- is a positive sum" (Rubin par. 4). Unfortunately, we did not evolve to think in this manner and have difficulty seeing the positive economic effects of immigration.

Despite controversy around the subject, there are many factors that suggest immigration is beneficial to recipient countries. Immigrants increase economic activity and growth because they enable employers to fill jobs for which the supply of labor was previously insufficient. With the extra resources that these immigrant workers bring, the market can begin producing more goods and services. This, say economists, is what raises standards of living of those in immigrant receiving countries (Ebeling 1).

Immigrants are also willing to be employed for less. This has many secondary effects that lead to long-term economic gains. In sectors of the economy that can employ immigrants for less production costs will go down because businesses will be able to pay their employees less in wages. Immigrants, in effect, grow the pool of labor available to work at lower prices, thereby driving down wages. This creates two economic benefits. First, profits are

increased, allowing employers to expand their own business and invest in the expansion of other business. As employers expand their business, they begin to hire more people and produce more goods. An increase of goods in the market usually causes prices to decrease, which will benefit every consumer of these goods and services. With the money they saved from buying less expensive goods and services, consumers will want to buy different things, thereby spurring growth in even more sectors of the economy.

For over 200 years economists have been advocating for the liberalization of trade as a free market policy to increase economic growth and standards of living. Arguments for the free circulation of labor can be traced back to the father of free trade economics, Adam Smith. In his book, The Wealth of Nations, he argues that the free market is the most productive economic system, and therefore the most beneficial to societies. Just as Smith argued that goods and services be traded freely, he argued that people as well should be allowed to trade their labor with whoever wants to hire them. Clearly, immigration barriers block the free movement, or trade, of labor. According to Smith, policies that block free trade are less productive and therefore less beneficial to society. In other words, free market economists favor “the elimination of all privileges that groups of individuals secure by imposing legal barriers to entry into the market, thereby artificially increasing the value of their services” (Maloberti 551). Developed country and U.S. citizens alike are paying extra for these artificially high priced goods and services. Imagine the economic expansion that would be created if citizens in these economies were able to spend this extra money elsewhere.

Although the free movement of labor through immigration is a free market policy, it is hardly ever proposed in politics. Since the 1980’s free market policies have dominated discussions of the global economy; the free movement of capital, goods, and services are strongly advocated by many countries as a way to increase people’s economic well being (Herrera par. 3). Yet the free movement of labor is almost always left out of these talks (Casey 18). This is interesting, considering the free movement of labor may be just as important to free market economies as the free movement of capital, goods or services (Casey 19). A freer movement of labor would allow for more perfect labor markets. Instead of being stuck in developing countries with little work and few prospects, immigrants could take their work to growing economies that need their labor.

The fact that at least some elements of the free movement of labor are not included in free trade agreements is made to seem even more nonsensical when one considers that these trade agreements are often the reason people need to immigrate in the first place. The free flow of labor goes hand in hand with free trade, yet immigration barriers do not allow this to happen. A perfect example of this can be seen in Mexico with the results of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Under NAFTA tariffs were lifted that once protected small, and mostly poor, Mexican farmers from an influx of cheaper U.S. food commodities (Guskin and Wilson 25). As U.S. foods flooded the Mexican market, native farmer's crops became worth much less. Many had to give up farming because they simply could not compete with bigger, more efficient American farms. Without work in their home countries, many breadwinners were left with no option but to try to get into the United States, where they knew they could find a job that would support their family back home. In some especially hard hit Mexican states hundreds of families were forced to migrate each week in search of work. Many chose to enter the U.S. illegally because they had no opportunity to do so legally (Avalos-Sartorio 7). Although free trade created this situation, America's restrictive immigration policies have essentially blocked the market from fixing it. It seems nonsensical to block a flow of labor that results from free trade. Ideally, Central American workers that lost their job could immigrate to the U.S. to find work. Yet, with today's American immigration policy, this is nearly impossible for most of them to do legally.

"The U.S. immigration system is still characterized by a convoluted set of arbitrary numerical quotas that were devised in the 1960's," writes Walter Ewing's in his article "The Many Facets of Immigration Reform (110)." He goes on to assert that these policies have created a decades long discrepancy in the amount of labor the United States lets in and the amount of labor the economy requires (113). The fact that America experienced such a spike in illegal immigration during the 1990's reflects the fact that immigration policy met neither U.S. employers nor Central American laborer's demands (Ewing 116). Outweighing immigrant's choice to move to America is the fact that capitalism effectively sucks them into the country by offering them so many jobs, regardless of their legality. Immigrant workers are only fulfilling a demand created by developed country economic systems. Evidence for this is seen in the visa application process. For both skilled and unskilled

labor the demand for work visas is so great that the limit is reached months in advance, leaving thousands who want to come to the country to work with no legal option to do so (Guskin and Wilson 115). This is not surprising considering the United States does not recognize economic refugees, such as those of Central America, when considering who to let in the country even though these people are often as helpless to improve their situation as any other type of refugee (Guskin and Wilson 45). It has already been shown that this policy leaves many trapped in their own countries without work, obviously worse off than if they were allowed to freely move their labor to where its demanded. If they were allowed to, many immigrants would come to America to work. The vast majority of these immigrants end up in the local labor market (Zientara 68). Jane Guskin and David L. Wilson write in their book The Politics of Immigration that the free movement of labor means “a profit-driven model of ‘labor mobility,’ in which employers benefit from a large global pool of qualified workers competing for jobs” (133). Immigrants also end up participating in other ways in the local economy. According to Ewing, illegal immigrants alone make up a very important part of the U.S. economy; they spend \$551.6 billion annually, create \$245 billion in annual economic output, and fill more than 2.8 million jobs (114). Clearly, immigrants contribute to the economy, and their labor is crucial to its continued growth. Furthermore, immigrants may be needed to combat aging populations, falling birth rates, and lack of low-skilled workers in developing countries. This seems to be the case, especially when one looks at demographics in the United States. By 2030, it is projected that the ratio of retired seniors to working age adults will increase by 67% as the country’s “Baby Boom” generation retires and younger generations have fewer children (Ewing 116). Demographer Dowell Myers writes in her article “Thinking Ahead About Our Immigration Future” that this will bring on “not only fiscal crisis in the Social Security and Medicare systems, but workforce losses due to mass retirements that will drive labor-force perilously low (1).” In addition, half the jobs that will be opening up due to these “mass retirements” and regular economic growth will be occupations that require no post-secondary training, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (Ewing 116). In fact, as seen in Table 1, growth in the non-skilled labor sector of the U.S. economy will be huge, but only 13% of the country’s native workers have less than a high school degree (Anrig and Wang). Of course, immigration is a major solution to these problems. Immigrants could help fill these jobs if barriers to them coming into the country were relaxed. This



would help the economy by allowing businesses to maximize production. Also, taxes on immigrant incomes would help perpetuate Social Security and Medicare, thereby supporting older generations economically.

So, many developed countries with aging populations may need to allow more immigration to combat high levels of retirements in their work forces. According to a year 2000 UN population study, the European Union would need annual immigration rates of twelve times what they are a now to maintain the current ratio of workers (Casey 31). The fact that such huge numbers of immigrants will be needed to fill positions of retired ‘Baby Boomers’ highlights the fact that other forces have much greater impacts on economies than does

Occupation	Amount of Training or On-the-Job Experience Needed	Increase in Jobs Between 2000-2010	Percentage Increase
Combined food preparation and serving workers	1 month or less	673,000	30%
Retail salespersons	1 month or less	510,000	12%
Cashiers	1 month or less	474,000	14%
Office clerks	1 month or less	430,000	16%
Security guards	1 month or less	391,000	35%
Waiters and waitresses	1 month or less	364,000	18%
Nursing aides, orderlies, and attendants	1 month or less	323,000	24%
Janitors and cleaners (except maids)	1 month or less	317,000	13%
Teacher assistants	1 month or less	301,000	24%
Home health aides	1 month or less	291,000	47%
Laborers and freight, stock, and material movers	1 month or less	289,000	14%
Landscaping and groundskeeping workers	1 month or less	260,000	29%
Personal and home care aides	1 month or less	258,000	62%
Receptionists and information clerks	1 month or less	256,000	24%
Truck drivers (light) or delivery services	1 month or less	215,000	19%
Packers and packagers(hand)	1 month or less	210,000	19%
Customer service representatives	1–12 months	631,000	32%
Truck drivers (heavy) and tractor-trailer	1–12 months	346,000	20%
Medical assistants	1–12 months	187,000	57%

immigration. Retirement policies, the participation of older people and women in the workforce, and lower birth rates are all factors that can affect an economy much more than the amount of immigrants entering the workforce. Further evidence for the U.S. economy's demand for immigrant labor, both legal and illegal, was generated in the aftermath of Alabama's laws that combat illegal immigration. Since employers in the state were required to hire only legal citizens there has been an extreme shortage of workers in sectors usually dominated by illegal immigrants. Produce has been rotting in fields as employers cannot find any unemployed native workers willing to do the jobs that the laws' supporters claim the illegal immigrants were stealing from them (Editorial: Alabama...).

This leads to the well-known and widely accepted premise that immigrants take jobs that native workers simply do not want to do (like the jobs in Table 1), at least not at the price employers are willing to pay. "Indeed, without cheap immigrant labor, some sectors of rich country economies – most notably agriculture and lower-end services – would face serious problems owing to lack of workers," writes economist Piotr Zientara (71). Companies that lack workers because of immigration barriers, such as those in Alabama, cannot reach their full production and may have to pay workers higher wages because of a shrunken supply of labor. This means higher prices for consumers and fewer profits to invest in economic expansion, which can result in less economic growth (Ebeling 2).

So, immigration is in many ways beneficial to the economies of receiving countries. In fact, according to a 2003 report from the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, the economic growth of the 1990's wouldn't have been possible without immigrant labor. It states that immigrants have been a driving force behind job growth in the country. They are now filling an increased share of jobs in the U.S. as demand for their labor has increased in the low-skilled labor sector since many native workers have become too educated to want these jobs (Anrig and Wang). It is in this way that immigration is most important to developing country economies. Immigrants do more than spend money in their new economies, which creates jobs; they also fill jobs that otherwise would have gone unfilled. Both of these facts help economic growth. For decades the political right in developed countries, especially the U.S., has focused its policy on free market economics as a means of creating wealth. It is time that these groups begin to embrace immigration as a part of free market policy; the

economics of immigration should be a justification for the right's support of more open borders, not a reason to build higher fences.

## **IMMIGRATION LIBERALIZATION AS A FREE MARKET DEVELOPMENT POLICY**

Aside from benefiting the economies of recipient countries, immigration liberalization helps immigrants and their families work toward better lives in their native countries. In this way, allowing freer migration is a way in which developed countries can help developing countries. In today's world, most immigrants move from poor to rich countries in search of work. However, many more are not allowed to move because of extensive immigration barriers; these barriers force the poor to stay in their countries, segregated from the rich. John P. Casey in his article "Open Borders" writes, "closed borders only entrench the global apartheid that keeps the poor in their homelands" (54). Not surprisingly, developing countries have been calling for the opening up of developed country labor markets and an end to this system of closed borders. Both the World Bank and the UN have acknowledged the benefits of a freer movement of labor for developing countries (Casey 16).

Increased immigration generates economic opportunities in immigrant sending countries as well as receiving countries. A major form in which developing country economies are helped is through remittances – immigrants sending money home to their families. In some developing countries this money makes up over 10% of GDP. Furthermore, this money is often spent on education or health care, which increase human capital and helps the development of these countries even more (Zientara 70). Many immigrants also return to their home countries and invest their profits in its economy. Even though wages of immigrant workers are usually rather low by developed country standards, they equate to large sums of money in their native, developing countries. This money can be used as capital to start new businesses. Allowing immigration also helps the dispersion of knowledge from rich to poor countries, which is crucial to the development of successful business and higher standards of living (Zientara 70). In many ways, more open immigration laws would help bridge the current income gap between the richer countries of

the northern hemisphere and the poorer countries of the southern hemisphere. Many on the political left see economic inequality as a terrible injustice; liberalizing immigration is one way to address this issue.

Another benefit of freer immigration to global society would be that developed countries could use free movement of labor policies as a type of development aid to poorer countries. First, allowing freer immigration will act as a safety valve for developing country economies that cannot create enough jobs for their populations. This is especially true for young people, who make up large percentages of the working population in developing countries. It is a well known fact that political unrest and resentment towards the west in developing countries is often tied to young populations who cannot find work. Also, as previously discussed, freer immigration laws help developing country economies. In fact, the UN estimates that in 2004 remittances injected \$172 billion into developing economies while during the same year aid made up less than 1/3 of this amount, around \$50 billion (Casey 34). If developing countries were to further open their borders to immigration, increased money from remittances would spur economic growth. Not only would free migration benefit both developing and developed countries, it would also give those in rich countries more incentive to effectively help the economies of poor countries. If economies in poorer countries were performing well their citizens would have less need to immigrate to the developed world (Casey 36-37).

## **IMMIGRATION LIBERALIZATION AS PART OF A GLOBAL HUMAN RIGHTS AGENDA**

More open borders are more than a smart choice economically for poor countries and rich country citizens; they are also the right choice morally. From the perspective of the progressive political left, immigration liberalization can be justified as part of a global human rights agenda that gives dignity and opportunity to the world's poor. Many feel that privileged citizens in the global community should feel an obligation to help the less fortunate. On top of this, isn't it just to give those living in poverty in developing countries

a chance at a better life by allowing them to work where their labor is demanded? For many progressive liberals the answer is yes. If developed country citizens truly believe that all people are equal, it would be nothing less than a tragedy for them to bar poor immigrants from coming into their country to work for a better life for themselves and their families.

However, current immigration laws do not allow many people to come to America in search of a better life. To many, this is a violation of these people's human rights (Guskin 133). Maloberti expresses this opinion: "rights entail the permissibility of not merely using resources, but also of exchanging them by mutual consent. Immigration barriers prevent individuals from doing so, and thus they preclude individuals from the opportunity to improve their lives" (550). What makes the situation even more unjust for the poor is that the world's rich usually have no problem moving from one country to another. Casey writes that the rich are "courted in official immigration programs, protected by internal labor markets of global organizations, and aided by a lucrative immigration law industry...In effect, it is already a borderless world for those who have the resources to exploit it" (18).

Furthermore, for citizens of democratic and free nations, freedom of movement within the country's borders is taken for granted. Anything less would be a violation of citizens' rights to work and live where they want. This thinking is reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees freedom of movement within one's country and also the right to leave one's country (The Universal Declaration...). But curiously, and perhaps reflecting current global sentiment towards immigration, it does not extend the right to settle in another country (Casey 15). However, if one is guaranteed the right to leave an oppressive country, but not allowed to settle in a new one, aren't they in effect not able to exercise their right to leave an oppressive country?

Allowing freer immigration would encourage positive change in developing country governments. Casey writes that "Expatriates often pressure for political change...Sending countries have benefited considerably from the political expertise of expatriates" (34-35). After living in developed countries with democracies, the experience of many immigrants is extremely valuable to their native countries when they return home. Many are elected to office or serve in government positions (Casey 35). Furthermore, immigration barriers decrease pressure on developing governments to improve. Since immigration is so difficult

there is very little competitive pressure on governments to give better lives to their people so that they would want to remain in their native country; many are effectively trapped in countries with bad governments. No matter how much they dislike their government, they will probably have to live there. In the article "Government by Choice" classical liberal Nicolas Maloberti argues, "immigration barriers usually condemn them to live in nations with defective institutional systems under which individuals lack incentives to save and invest" he goes on to say that governments can take advantage of their populations only when there are "constraints on mobility" (556). If people could move freely, ineffective governments would collapse as those unhappy with the system leave.

Strong immigration barriers effectively trap people in countries with poor governments and standards of living. Many times people in developing countries have no way out of extreme poverty and unhealthy living conditions. John P. Casey writes of the moral obligation developing countries have to help these people. If they cannot or will not improve their situation through effective aid they should at least be willing to admit poor immigrants into their country as a way of improving their lives. This seems especially true when considering many developed country's history of exploiting their former colonies, which today have become the developing countries that immigrants come from. Freer migration, says Casey, would increase equality and improve the lives of the poor (38). Many NGO's and advocates for the world's poor see the benefit of economic liberalization in improving lives in developing countries. They call for a greater emphasis on the "social justice dimensions of economic and trade agreements, which includes increased rights of the circulation of labor" (Casey 46). Again, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is applicable; it states in Article 23 "everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment." Closed borders infringe upon this human right, keeping developing country citizens trapped in small labor markets with low-paying jobs and few opportunities for employment.

Aside from denying the poor a way to improve their lives, restrictive immigration laws also block the unification of their families. This can happen in a number of ways. In the U.S., deportations of parents with native-born children, who automatically have citizenship, often leave families separated (Guskin and Wilson 47). 52% of Guatemalans deported from the United States leave a spouse or child in the country (Guskin and Wilson 123). An

astonishing 5,100 children of immigrants have been left to foster care as a result of their parents being either detained or deported (Riggs). According to Guskin and Wilson, “the deportation of a breadwinner can plunge children and partners into sudden poverty, and force them to seek public benefits” (123). Strong border enforcement also means that once illegal immigrants arrive in a country, they are separated from their families in their home country for decades because the risk and cost of illegal entry is too high for immigrants to frequently forgo (Guskin and Wilson 53). There is no doubting the emotional and financial toll that this takes on immigrant families.

When illegal immigrants do work and live in the United States, their undocumented status often makes them easy targets for abuse. Working and living conditions for illegal immigrants are notoriously poor. Employers and landlords know that illegal immigrants probably won’t report abuses to authorities or organize for better treatment for fear of being deported. Fear of contacting law enforcement also makes undocumented immigrants an easy target for thieves. They also have trouble applying for jobs and school, finding housing and getting drivers licenses (Guskin and Wilson 51-52). Immigrants who lack legal status but have lived and gone to school in the United States since their childhood often find themselves with no option for post-secondary education because non-citizens are not eligible for financial aid (Guskin and Wilson 54). This lack of educational opportunities perpetuates the poor salaries and living conditions of immigrant populations and does nothing to help their productivity or integration into society. Giving these people access to citizenship would improve their working and living conditions, increase their levels of education and make their lives safer.

## **ARGUMENTS AGAINST IMMIGRATION LIBERALIZATION AND THEIR REBUTTALS**

Despite apparent economic and ethical reasons for more liberal immigration laws, there are many who favor a world of closed borders, or at least borders that are closed to immigrants. When considering the popularity of free immigration policies John P. Casey writes that

“the vast majority of the population is against such a policy and there is wide-spread opposition to immigration in general” (24). Many developed countries favor restrictive immigration policies because they fear immigration hurts the welfare of native citizens by ruining culture, raising crime levels, decreasing wages, taking jobs, threatening national security and flooding recipient countries with huge numbers of poor people which creates ghettos and puts a strain on government goods and services.

All of these reasons- immigrations effect on the economy, society and national security- lead anti-immigration organizations to call for stricter enforcement of immigration laws and reductions in the number of immigrants the country allows in. Some of these groups would even like to see the country’s population shrink as a result of having a closed border policy (Immigration 101). The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a leading anti-immigration group, has rather ambitious policy recommendations: it calls for increasing border control, more enforcement of immigration laws in the country’s interior by local police departments, and a system of national ID cards to verify citizenship. FAIR’s policies are by no means extreme when compared to those of the Republican Party, whose platform on immigration includes “completing the border fence quickly,” denying illegal immigrants driver’s license, and opposing any type of amnesty (National Security). Mitt Romney, a leading candidate for the 2012 Republican Presidential nomination, takes a firm stance on immigration. He proposed a system of government ID cards that would show immigrants had proper federal documentation. Those without valid cards would effectively be barred from the employment market. He hopes illegal immigrants will “self-deport” as a result of not being able to work or use even the most basic of the country’s public services (Boroff & Planas). Through policies like these, anti-immigration contingencies hope to reduce the number of illegal immigrants in the country thereby reducing the negative economic and social effects they think they create.

Being able to choose who can live in a country, and therefor immigration levels, is seen as a fundamental right to national sovereignty. The debate on immigration today is largely shaped by the idea that, under international law, nations have the “right and power to grant or withhold permission to settle (Casey 19).” This right is considered in current international law to trump what Maloberti argued was the right of the individual to freely



trade his labor for a salary with anyone willing to do so (550). Christopher Wellman explains that:

as an individual has the right to determine whom (if anyone) he or she would like to marry, a group of fellow-citizens has a right to determine whom (if anyone) it would like to invite into its political community...a state's freedom of association entitles it to exclude all foreigners from its political community (Maloberti 549).

Arguments for freedom of association like these generally stand up in courts of law, especially in the United States. For example, the U.S. Supreme Court has defended the rights of private organizations, like the Jaycees, to exclude women on the grounds that it was their right to decide whom to include in their groups and that allowing anyone would infringe on the groups freedom of expression. The argument used by the Jaycees has many parallels with the argument nations use to exclude immigrants. Nations should be able to decide just who gets to make up their national character.

So, a nation should have the right to exclude whom it wants according to current norms in international law. To take away this right would infringe upon its sovereignty. However, this does not mean that it is in their best interest to do so; countries have the right to trade protectionism as well but most have accepted that the free trade of goods and services is a practice with net economic benefits. Immigration should be seen in the same light and immigration barriers should be seen as protectionism for native workers, a practice with negative economic consequences. The arguments against strict immigration laws are compelling, even when considering the arguments of anti-immigration factions.

*The "Mexican Reconquista" Argument: Allowing such high numbers of "Hispanics" into the country will dilute American culture and ruin its "social fabric."*

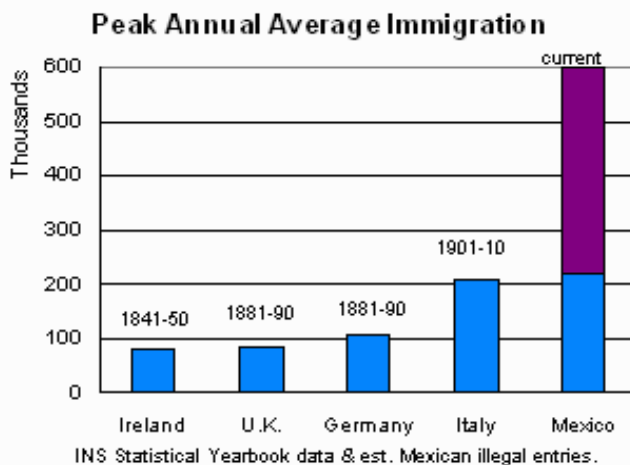
Anti-immigration groups assert that today's immigrants do not share cultural values that made America so successful in the past, such as a support of democratic institutions. AIC states on its website that:

Because America's culture, customs, language, and laws are under assault from foreigners who come to live here and, instead of learning the American way of

life, choose to impose their own alien cultures, languages, and institutions upon us, we must review our heritage and understand the need to preserve it, lest America self-destruct through ethnic strife (A Brief History...).

They argue that allowing more immigrants will only destroy the social fabric that makes up America today. Having large numbers of immigrants that were raised under different values and institutions could introduce corruption and chaos to the United States (Maloberti 558). This would undoubtedly change the structure of the country itself, leading to what some would see as reprehensible results (Maloberti 559). Micheal Walzer makes this point clear, he writes that with no barriers to immigration a “historically stable, ongoing association of men and women with some special commitment to one another and some special sense of their common life” could not exist (Maloberti 551).

Those who see immigration as a threat to culture are quick to point out that the United States has never received such high numbers of immigration. Current levels of immigration are double that of what they were when America allowed free migration from Europe: around 1,750,000 per year currently compared to around 880,000 per year between 1900 and 1910. Furthermore, and adding to the argument that current immigrants will dilute American culture and institutions, is that the country has never had such an influx of one ethnic group. The current entry level of Mexican immigrants coming to America each year, around 600,000, is more than triple the highest previous amount for one single ethnic group per year, as seen in Graph 1 (Current Immigration...). Many call the current surge of Latino immigrants a “demographic Reconquista” in which the U.S. – Mexican border will be blurred, the country will be divided, and the Mexicans will reclaim land seized by the U.S. government in the 1800’s (Zientara 70).



**Figure 1 Peak Annual Average Immigration**

## Rebuttal to the “Mexican Reconquista” Argument

Immigration opponents cite the fact that there has never been such an influx of one type of ethnic immigrants. 600,000 Mexicans enter the country each year. The previous highest total was around 200,000 Italians entering the country each year between 1900-1910. FAIR seems to be implying that this is evidence for the “demographic Reconquista” that will ruin American culture and turn the country into Mexico. What groups like FAIR fail to note is that the U.S. population in 1910 was about 1/3 of what it is today: around 92 million compared to around 310 million (Demographic history...). This means that proportionately to the country’s population the amount of Mexican immigrants today is equal to the amount of Italian immigrants in 1910. So, to say that today’s Mexican immigrants will have more impact on American culture than Italian immigrants did in 1910 is unfair. Most immigration opponents today do not regret allowing Italians to immigrate to the country in the past; in fact, many may be their descendants. Also, to say that Arizona and California are becoming like Mexico is to ignore the fact that California and Arizona *were* Mexican before the U.S. forced the Mexican cession of these territories after its victory in the Mexican-American War in 1848. These territories never lost their Mexican heritage and Mexican immigrants today in these areas are only carrying on societal traditions that have existed for centuries.

Immigration opponents have also argued that today’s new wave of immigrants is too different in culture, customs and language, to be integrated successfully into American society. Others have said they will ruin American culture, changing it into a new Vietnam, China or Mexico. This has been said for generations about each new group of immigrants. As Ebeling points out, “with every wave of immigrants, the concern was expressed that the new group would not be able to adapt to American life” (3). These fears turned out to be wrong. In the 1800’s it was Germans who were accused of always needing to speak their native language and living in ethnic ghettos. It was said that immigrant populations like the Germans would never integrate into American society. History has shown that within one generation the children of immigrants become “Americanized;” they speak English and disperse throughout the country. Guskin and Wilson cite the fact that today’s immigrants are just as likely as past immigrants to learn English and integrate into society (80). On top of this, globalization is only making integration into American society easier; many

immigrants have already been exposed to western lifestyles. Yes, these immigrants will change American culture. But they will change it for the better; America is a melting pot of the world's greatest characteristics. It has been since immigrants founded the country and helped it grow. For over 250 years immigrants have been a positive force of change in America. There is no reason to think that today's immigrants will not do the same as immigrants before them, to say they won't is to ignore the lessons taught by history.

The "Poor Pouring In" Argument: Open borders would result in poor people flooding into the country and living in poor ethnic enclaves. This would put a strain on public education and infrastructure, welfare, healthcare, and the prison system.

Those who lobby for stronger immigration laws point to the fact that today's immigrants will overrun America with poor people. They assert that immigrants today are an even greater burden on the U.S. government budget than previous generations. They receive public funds for welfare, healthcare and education. They also put a strain on public infrastructure such as roads and sewage systems. The Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) argues that immigrants of previous generation were more likely to return home after they had made enough money to support their families, thereby avoiding many of the costs they impose on society. In 1904 nearly 37% of immigrants in America returned home, while today the number is only 15%. This is a huge problem; according to FAIR the average immigrant has a "net annual cost of \$2700" because of the small amount of taxes they pay relative to their use of government goods and services (Immigration Now...). Furthermore, those who see the welfare system as illegitimate especially dislike free immigration. Maloberti writes that for these people "immigration barriers are taken to be justified insofar as they prevent further extension of such a system and by doing so prevent even greater numbers of illegitimate transfers (549,). The National Academy of Sciences found that although immigrants are only 10% of households, they cost native households over \$250 a year in tax money to support them (Guskin and Wilson 63). This statistic is reflected in the fact that, on average, immigrant households pay 1/3 less in taxes than does the average American household because of their lower earnings. These lower earnings also mean that 21% of immigrant households are on welfare, compared to 14% of native households (Immigration 101).

To add to this problem, FAIR points out that “ethnic enclaves are huge and growing,” and that these immigrant populations have negative effects on society. Casey writes “most importantly, the free movement of immigrants is seen as threatening current living standards...but there are also fears about loss of existing culture, about rising crime” (25). Upon arriving, many immigrants move to low-income areas with cheap housing. The arrival of more immigrants will only increase the amount of low-quality, overcrowded housing. FAIR notes the “share of overcrowded housing is seven times higher in high immigration cities than in low immigration cities” (Immigration 101). Furthermore, these immigrant populations cost the American taxpayer. Immigrant use of “government infrastructure” costs \$1.37 billion a year in tax money. 43% of immigrants do not have medical insurance, when they cannot pay for these bills it is passed on to the public, costing them a total of \$20 billion annually. Taxpayer money also pays for the education of immigrant children. FAIR makes sure to point out that:

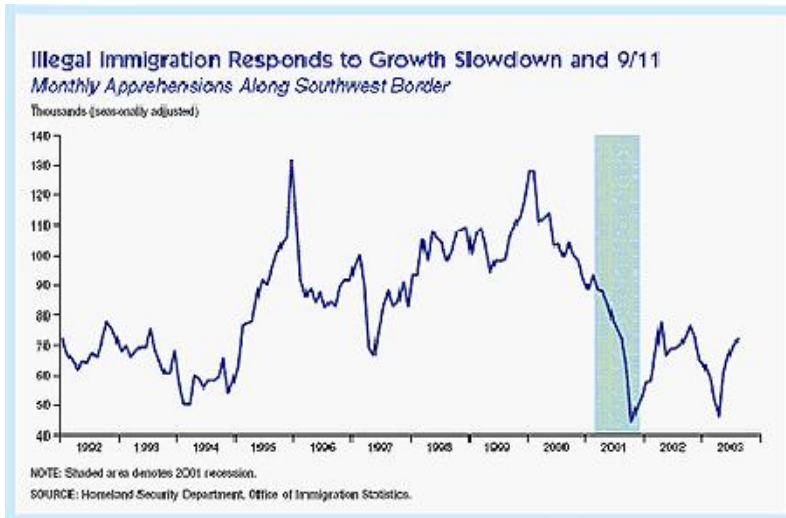
Without school-age immigrants and the children of immigrants, school enrollment would not be rising at all. The estimated cost to the American taxpayer for the education of immigrants’ children is over \$30 billion a year (Immigration 101).

On top of these costs, there are statistics that imply a correlation between immigration and increased crime levels. For example, 25% of the U.S. federal prison population is foreign-born and the government has around 30,000 immigrants in detention each day, which cost almost \$1 billion annually (Guskin and Wilson 131).

## Rebuttal to the Argument that the Poor would Overcrowd America

Anti-immigration proponents argue that if the country opened its borders to more immigrants there would be a huge influx of poor people that would put strains on the country’s social institutions and infrastructure. However, there is no telling just how many immigrants would come if America opened its borders. It is hard to believe that more immigrants would come then there are jobs available. Evidence is seen for this when one compares U.S. economic performance with immigration flows; it seems that immigration falls dramatically when the economy is performing poorly. This makes perfect sense; immigrants come when jobs are available and they stay home when work becomes scarce in

the U.S., like during the recession of the early 2000's, as in Graph 2. When fewer jobs were available during the recession that began in 2001, fewer immigrants attempted to enter the country. Why would immigrants flood into a country that has few job opportunities for them? It wouldn't be possible for unemployed immigrants to support both themselves and their families in their native countries on the U.S.'s welfare benefits alone.



**Figure 2 Monthly Apprehensions Along Southwest Border**

John P. Casey points to history as a rebuttal to the argument that free migration will bring massive amounts of poor immigrants to developed countries, he writes:

all indications from past experiences of free movement between richer and poorer areas are that in fact there is no continuing mass movement to richer areas. Any spike in arrivals in richer areas is temporary and soon drops off, and the spike is counter-balanced by the return to the countries of origin of established immigrants, who had in effect been help captive by immigration restrictions (27).

Proof that hordes of immigrants will not pour into rich countries is illustrated in the experience of the European Union. Even with freedom of movement between member countries, there was no mass migration from the European Union's poorer southern countries to its richer northern countries during its beginning in the 1980's despite fears of

mass exoduses (Casey 29). Twenty years later as the E.U. prepared to absorb 10 new countries with average incomes around half that of existing E.U. countries, fears of mass migrations again arose. However, as Guskin and Wilson write, “the feared economic consequences of mass migration from new E.U. member states to more prosperous western European states have largely failed to materialize “(136). Even though European Union member citizens have the right to live in whatever country they feel benefits them most, less than 3% live away from their native countries (Casey 28).

This statistic reflects the fact that most people don’t like leaving their homes. All people face emotional, social, economic and psychological disincentives when making the choice to immigrate. Leaving the comfort of one’s native language and culture, as well as leaving behind family members, is not the first choice of immigrants. For many it is a last resort, as families simply cannot make enough money to get out of poverty and improve their lives in their home countries. Zientara has also found that “cultural affinity and geographical proximity (as well as the presence of a diaspora) seem to be instrumental in determining where migrants move” (67). Even if immigrants did want to leave home they would have to be able to afford to do so first; it would be difficult for an immigrant that earns \$1 a day in his home country to afford a \$1000 plain ticket to the United States. Casey writes that, paradoxically, it is not the poorest, most desperate that migrate, but instead the ones with the “personal and financial capital” to do so (30).

Circular migration is another concept that drives down the likelihood of poor people overcrowding rich countries under a system of open borders. Many believe that under a global system of open borders, immigrant would be able to “circulate” between their native countries and their countries of origin (Casey 28). Immigrants would no longer be “bottled up” in recipient countries out of fear of not being able to get back in if they return to their native countries. Another example of what has happened under open border agreements between countries with large differences in wealth can be seen with the arrangement between the United States and Puerto Rico. Although Puerto Ricans have full rights to live in the United States, nearly half of all Puerto Rican immigrants that came to the United States returned to Puerto Rico in less than 2 years (Casey 30). A system like this, under which immigrants could practice circular migration, would be much more in tune with the needs not only of the immigrants but also of recipient country economies. Furthermore,

developing countries may begin to realize the correlation of wealth disparities between countries and immigration. Knowing that poor countries send immigrants, developed countries may take more initiative to improve standards of living in the developing world. In this sense, rich country aid and trade policies can directly contribute to better living conditions in the developed world so that people there have less need to immigrate (Casey 31).

### Rebuttal to the Argument that Immigrants put a Strain on Public Education and Infrastructure, Welfare, Healthcare, and the Prison System

Another argument against immigrants is that they do not pay taxes and are a burden on the welfare, health and prison systems as well as public infrastructure. A closer look at the argument used by anti-immigration groups and politicians reveals some flaws in their arguments. Take the statistic used by FAIR that immigrant households cost native households \$2700 dollars a year. Guskin and Wilson write that “taken out of context this seems like ammunition for immigration opponents. But native-born young people with families are also a ‘burden’ on the system in the exact same way – they too make less money and pay less in taxes while they are raising their children (63).” The National Academy of Sciences, the group that initially found this statistic, went on to explain that in the long-run immigrants more than make up for what they take in the beginning, just like native worker do over time and as their children leave home (Guskin and Wilson 64). The fact that in 2009 Americans 65 and older had an average net worth of \$120,457 while those 35 and younger had an average net worth of \$3,662 seems to back this assertion (Marche table 1). When considering health care one must take into the account that most immigrants are young, meaning that they are on average no more likely need government services than native citizens. Young immigrants have the chance to pay their dues like native citizens before they take advantage of social security and Medicare. The assertion that immigrants are disproportionately more likely to be criminal is also unfair. A joint study by two nonpartisan Washington-based research groups, the Urban Institute and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, actually found the *opposite*: “immigrants are disproportionately unlikely to be criminal” (Guskin and Wilson 83). Robert J. Sampson, the



chairman of the Department of Sociology at Harvard University, has found that first generation immigrants commit violent crimes at a rate 45 percent lower than third generation or native-born Americans (Immigrants Responsible For...). He goes on to say that "In the '90s and continuing to the present, we've seen a great deal of increase in immigration from countries around the world. In fact, as immigration has increased, we've seen correlated declines in the crime rate" (par 8). Sampson's finding seem to suggest that immigration is at least partially responsible for *lower* crime rates, a finding contrary to the stereotype that immigrants bring crime. Furthermore, if immigrants were made legal they would have more chances at finding legitimate work, which would reduce their need to depend on criminal activity to make a living.

Another problem to immigration liberalization is that many see any redistribution of wealth through welfare as an injustice because it violates citizen's rights by redistributing money against their will. For these people open borders are undesirable because the welfare system will be expanded as immigrants arrive. In other words, these people are willing to create immigration barriers (which infringe on an individual's right to move in search of a better life) in order to prevent an extension of the welfare system (which they see as a violation of their rights). Even for these people, writes Maloberti, a welfare state with open borders is preferable to a welfare state with closed borders (555). A person's country of origin is morally irrelevant when considering their rights towards welfare. Even if welfare is an injustice, "maintaining of immigration barriers entails an equal injustice, at least for those who might otherwise escape from dire situations" because they prevent people from moving to countries where they can improve their lives. For Maloberti, it is not acceptable to prevent one injustice, welfare, by invoking and even greater injustice, immigration barriers (556-557). It seems that here Maloberti is employing a utilitarian argument; allowing immigrants to take advantage of welfare at the expense of a country's tax payers will create more "happiness" than would closing its borders and keeping the welfare state small by not allowing anyone new to join. This being said it must be remembered that immigrants will very likely immigrate to work, not to receive welfare benefits. If they were made legal, the tax revenue created from taxing immigrant income would actually benefit the welfare state, not be a burden on it.

Any argument that asserts immigration is a strain on welfare and government budgets is inevitably linked to the fact that illegal immigrants don't pay taxes, but they can't pay all their taxes because the government has no way of billing them. Immigration opponents are essentially blaming immigrants for a problem that was created by policies they advocate, mainly not giving immigrants citizenship. By legalizing immigration, the U.S. would gain billions in tax revenue from previously illegal workers that were not being fully taxed (Guskin and Wilson 139). Zientara cites a U.S. Congressional Budget Office report on an immigration legalization, or amnesty, bill that proves this assumption. The report found that by legalizing current illegal immigrants in the U.S. the government would increase its revenue by \$66 billion over a ten year period through income and payroll taxes on newly legalized immigrants. This new tax revenue would result in a net *gain* in the federal budget of \$12 billion over 10 years as newly legalized immigrants would only use \$54 billion in government benefits during that same time period (115). Also, as previously explained, immigrant labor increases corporate profits. This, says Zientara, will also generate more tax revenue for the federal government as it will get more money from the taxation of these companies' profits (71). Finally legalized immigrants make more money, thereby increasing the federal government's revenue from income taxes (Guskin and Wilson 55). So, although on the surface immigration looks to be harmful to recipient country economies and welfare systems, when one looks at the long term and secondary benefits of immigrants working legally, it is clear that immigration brings a net benefit to recipient countries. When it comes to welfare, it seems that immigration is again the right choice morally and economically.

### Economic Argument: "Immigrants take Native Jobs"

Aside from costs to society, opponents of immigration also point to what they claim are its negative economic effects. A central claim is that immigrants take native jobs. Casey notes that the poor in immigrant receiving countries will be exposed to competition because "low-skilled and low-waged labor is theoretically substitutable by immigrants" (32). Nearly 2 million American workers are displaced each year by immigrants, and providing assistance for these laid-off Americans costs taxpayers \$15 billion a year (Immigration 101). What is even more disheartening for immigration opponents is that the U.S. continues to let in immigrants while around 10% of its population is unemployed. In the next ten

years 22 million jobs will be created for 17 million native workers, but FAIR states that “this job creation will be cancelled out by the 6.5 million immigrants expected to enter the job market (Immigration 101).”

## Rebuttal to the Argument that Immigrants take Native Jobs

The claim that immigrants take native jobs is based on shortsighted, flawed economics. Primarily, it is derived from the false assumption that there is only a finite amount of work to be done, meaning that when an immigrant takes a job, a native has one less available place to work. However, Ebeling explains, “there is always more work to be done as long as scarcity exists” (1). He goes on to state that when the supply of labor in an economy is increased, so too is the amount of goods and services produced and purchased. Consumer demand is limited by the amount of resources available to produce goods and services, which effects price. Therefore, immigration, instead of taking jobs from Americans, actually allows the U.S. economy to fill jobs for which it couldn’t before, because of a lack of willing labor. The increased quantity of goods and services that this results in actually raises the standard of living for Americans as their demand as consumers is better met (Ebeling 2). Maloberti writes:

contrary to what it implied by common trends of reasoning, economies tend to absorb immigrants by expanding job opportunities rather than by displacing native workers...it would be surprising if an increase in labor were to produce stagnation and misery rather than an expansion of the overall economy (560).

Even conservative think tanks, like the Liberty Fund at which Maloberti is a fellow, acknowledge that immigration results in net job creation. A study on immigration and employment that spanned 100 years, from 1891 to 1991, by Ohio University professors Richard Vedder and Lowell Galloway seems to support Maloberti’s assertion. Vedder and Galloway found that “higher rates of foreign-born population historically have corresponded to lower unemployment rates;” immigrants increase output and the demand for labor, are highly productive, and “promote capital formation through high savings rates” (Immigrants and the Economy). Obviously, immigrants take jobs, but when they buy goods and services they create new jobs as well (Guskin and Wilson 68). Evidence for this can be seen in the European Union. During the first decade that free movement of labor

was allowed between the richer countries of the north and the poorer countries of the south, unemployment rates, contrary to what was feared, actually fell in all E.U. countries (Guskin and Wilson 131).

### Economic Argument: “Immigrants Lower Native Wages”

Besides taking native jobs, anti-immigration leaders also claim that immigration depresses wages in recipient countries. There is no doubt that immigrants are willing to work for less than native workers. In fact, it is not at all surprising when considering that wages in developed countries are four to twelve times higher than in developing countries (Freeman 154). Even a meager salary in a developed country is a huge improvement for immigrants and sometimes enough to support immigrant families in their native countries. However, there is evidence that wages are lowered for low skilled jobs in recipient countries as a result of immigrant’s willingness to work for less as well as their contributing to a growing labor supply. In his article “In Defense of Free Migration,” Richard M. Ebeling states that “It is true that when immigrants try to enter particular occupations, they may find willing employers only if they offer themselves at lower wages than that which existing employees are receiving” (2). According to the National Academy of Sciences, immigration has been responsible for a 44% decrease in the salaries of native-born workers who did not finish high school because many immigrants are substitutes for these workers (Immigration 101). Also, immigrants come with low-levels of skill and education; FAIR points out that there has been a quadrupling over the past 20 years in the gap between native education levels and immigrant education levels (Immigration 101). These facts, say those in favor of stronger border control, mean that immigration is harmful to native workers.

### Rebuttal to the Argument that Immigrants Lower Native Wages

The claim that immigrants lower wages, thereby hurting the economy, is also based on shortsighted economics. It is true those immigrants who are willing to work for less than natives drive down wages. However, as Ebeling explains, this totally ignores “beneficial secondary effects” (3). With cheaper labor, goods and services can be produced at lower costs, which means greater profits for business. With this extra money, production can be expanded and consumer prices will be lowered. As a whole, consumers and immigrants are better off. The only group that loses is the small group of workers who were not willing to

work for the wages the immigrants are; these people would be out of work. But even these people will benefit from the cheaper goods and services and economic expansion that immigrant labor brings. This extra money will increase demand in other sectors of the economy, which means that employers in these areas will hire more people. "Thus," says Ebeling, "for consumers in general, numerous goods and services will be less expensive; and for many workers, there will be an increased demand for their labor" (3). Still, groups such as FAIR argue that lower wages as a result of immigration are bad overall. Ironically, the same anti-immigration policies they and similar groups advocate for actually make the problem worse. Having a group of workers that cannot become legal citizens only provides a pool of labor that cannot organize for better pay and working conditions. An illegal immigrant has little bargaining power when it comes to pay, hours, and working condition. If immigrant workers were allowed to become citizens they could organize more easily to lobby for better pay and working conditions. The upward pressure on wages from legalizing low-skilled laborers would help to combat drops in native-worker wages and increase government tax revenue, as these workers would finally be fully taxed. However, rises in prices would be likely, as employers would have to pay their newly legal employees more.

## Economic Argument: "Immigrant Remittances Drain the U.S.

### Economy of Money

Immigration opponents often cite the high levels of remittances sent home by immigrants to their native countries. As of 2002, Latin American immigrants alone sent nearly \$28 billion to their families back home (Guskin & Wilson 67). Anti-immigration groups cite the fact that this money does not stay in the United States where it could have been used to buy goods and services locally. Furthermore, the U.S. government loses any tax revenue that would have been generated from these local purchases. They see remittances as just another way for immigrants to avoid paying taxes to the U.S. government, which makes them an even greater burden to the native taxpayer (Parker par. 5).

## Rebuttal to the Argument that Remittances Drain the U.S. Economy of Money

Again, immigration opponents have taken a simplistic view of immigrant's economic impact. At first sight, it seems that money in the form of remittances sent to foreign countries is lost forever to the U.S. economy. However, this is not the whole story. Remittances bolster the economies of immigrants sending countries. With this extra money in their pockets, family members of immigrants can buy more goods and services, which are often times produced in the U.S. Guskin and Wilson write that remittances often "go to countries like Mexico, which are tightly linked to the United States economically [NAFTA]- so that a lot of the money comes back in purchases of U.S. goods and services" (67). For example, in 2008 nearly a quarter of all Californian exports went either to China or Mexico, both of which have huge numbers of expatriates living in the state (Waslin par. 5). Michele Waslin, a Senior Policy Analyst at the Immigration Policy Center, writes "U.S. Remittances facilitate demand for U.S. exports and make U.S. goods more competitive" (par. 5). Another way to look at remittances is that they send abroad the income that immigrants earn domestically. If this money is spent on goods and services produced in their own country it amounts in a reduction in demand for American goods and services. This creates a similar effect as a native U.S. citizen buying an import, which is certainly a right most Americans like to have. Furthermore, around 80% of immigrants send money home through U.S. money transfer companies, like Western Union (Parker par. 6). Even the George W. Bush administration worked with the industry to promote its growth in order to help both the U.S. economy and immigrant sending economies (Parker par 11). Finally, and maybe most importantly, the \$28 billion that Latino immigrants send home yearly is really not a large enough amount of money to have any serious effect on the \$15 trillion a year U.S. economy (Report for...). Any small loss is far outweighed by the previously discussed economic gains associated with immigration, and immigrants spend the majority of their salaries in the U.S. economy.

## The National Security Argument: “Immigration is a Threat to National Security”

Finally, with events like September 11, immigration has increasingly been tied to national security issues. Obviously, the terrorists who carried out the attacks came from outside the U.S. Some believe not allowing immigration would have stopped the attacks from happening in the first place. Others say that increasing border security is crucial to national security and the War on Terror (National Security). Furthermore, some suggest that Muslim immigrants may feel more allegiance to their religion than they do to their new country (Zientara 69).

## Rebuttal to the National Security Argument

The Republican Party in the United States and anti-immigration groups across the world have consistently tried to justify closed borders as a security need. In fact, the Republican Party’s official stance on immigration is found in its national security platform suggesting that above all else, immigration is a security issue (National Security). This seems like a convenient way to tie immigration to a topic that is especially important to the American public after 9/11. There is no doubt that every country should know who is entering its territory and if these people have criminal records, but to connect today’s immigrants with terrorism is misleading. It is unfair to link immigrants with terrorist acts, especially immigrants that enter the country through its southern border. Although “immigrants” who entered the country legally on visas carried out 9/11, a U.S. citizen and Gulf-War veteran carried out the second most deadly attack, the Oklahoma City bombing. But Gulf-War veterans haven’t been facing the same scrutiny as immigrants have in the U.S.’s War on Terror (Guskin and Wilson 86). The U.S. government has used the War on Terror to create anti-immigrant sentiment and increase deportations of illegal immigrants that the country has unfairly depicted as terrorist threats. In this way the Republican Party has been able to carry out its own anti-illegal immigration agenda under the guise of national security.

## Problems with the Philosophy of Stronger Border Controls to Reduce Immigration

The first solution of groups that oppose freer migration always seems to be to step up enforcement. The Republican Party in the United States has for decades focused on ways to make illegal immigration more difficult, but has rarely put effort into making legal immigration more feasible. This ignores the fact that immigrants are coming because jobs are available; employers are willing to employ them. Trying to block immigration flows is only a “Band-Aid” policy that does not address the underlying factors that draw illegal immigrants to the country in the first place. Another problem is that there is strong evidence that constantly increasing enforcement spends astronomical amounts of taxpayer money while showing little results in blocking immigrant flows. In the past two decades, the United States has increased its border control budget nearly ten-fold (Casey 33). But this did not lead to less illegal immigrants entering the United States. In fact, as Guskin and Wilson point out, “the number of unauthorized immigrants in the United States rose by some five million from 1990 to 2000, at a significantly faster rate than in previous decades, and continuing to rise almost as quickly afterwards” (97-98). This statistic should be very troubling to those who see stronger border enforcement as the answer to illegal immigration, such as the Republican Party in the United States. Even though the U.S. was spending more than it ever had on border control, it failed miserably at keeping immigrants out. Walter A. Ewing puts the statistics in a more simple light: while the U.S. Border Patrols budget increased from \$326.2 million in 1992 to \$2.7 billion in 2009, an increase of 714%, the number of unauthorized immigrants roughly tripled in the U.S., as seen in Graphs 3 and 4 (111). Anti-immigration groups also point out that the U.S. spends billions each year detaining and deporting illegal immigrants, but they seem to fail to realize that this cost, along with a substantial amount of border patrol costs, would be avoided if America allowed freer migration.

Furthermore, organized crime is given a never-ending source of income through smuggling people past the U.S.’s beefed up border control. Since the U.S. began to more strictly enforce it border, the price of being smuggled into the United States has increased by nearly 800% (Guskin and Wilson 98). Reports now claim that fees charged by smugglers



have steadily risen to as much as \$3,000 per illegal immigrants helped across the border (Crowe par. 3). If this were true, smugglers would be making \$2.5 billion a year off the estimated 850,000 illegal immigrants entering the country annually (Bahrapour par. 2). Not only does this increase these criminal organizations ability to traffic drugs and carry out other gang related activities, it also endangers immigrants because many times smugglers rob and take advantage of them.

Increased border control also causes more immigrant deaths as immigrants try to go around heavily enforced areas. Guskin and Wilson explain that the main effect of increased enforcement was to “squeeze the balloon;” immigrants were forced to hire more expensive smugglers and to take more remote routes of entry, often through difficult terrain and scorching deserts (98). This has resulted in higher numbers of border crossing deaths. Ewing writes that as a result of the U.S.’s “concentrated border-enforcement strategy” there has been a surge in migrant deaths; 5,607 between 1994 and 2008 (111).

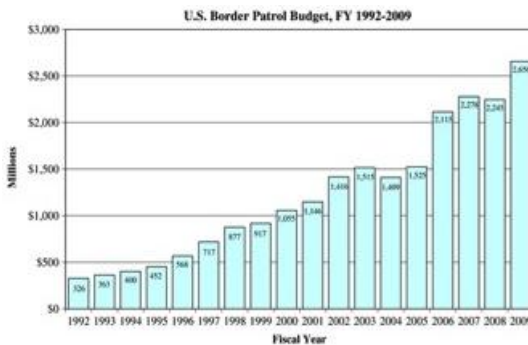
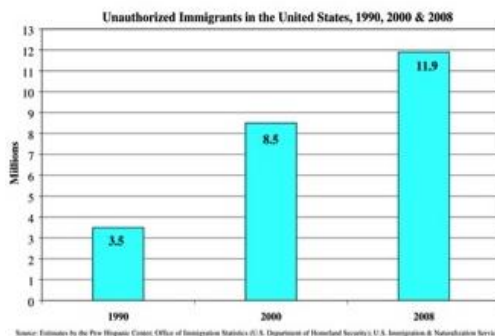


Figure 3 US Border Patrol Budget



Source: Estimates by the Pew Hispanic Center, Office of Immigration Statistics (U.S. Department of Homeland Security), U.S. Immigration & Naturalization Service.

Figure 4 Unauthorized Immigrants in the US

Another reason why stricter enforcement policies are unproductive is that, paradoxically, increased border controls actually make illegal immigrants stay in the country. Because of the risk and expense associated with entering the country illegally, undocumented immigrants are much less likely to come for a few months to work and then return home. Currently, 25% of undocumented workers return home within the first twelve months, half the percentage that returned home in the 1980's, before stricter border controls (Guskin and Wilson 99). Wayne A. Cornelius, a political science professor at the University of California, San Diego, sums up the situation well: "the U.S. border-centered immigration control strategy has been effective in bottling up illegal immigrants within the United States, not necessarily in deterring them from coming in the first place" (Guskin and Wilson 99).

## **POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**

If evidence suggests that the argument for freer migration is stronger than the argument of immigration opponents, the U.S. should liberalize its immigration policies. This does not mean that the country should stop all enforcement of its borders and let in anyone who can make it. It does mean that the U.S. should make immigration easier by substantially lowering immigration barriers. A start would be to create a program in which unauthorized immigrants could apply for legal status. Currently there are millions of illegal immigrants in the U.S. who have no way of becoming legal. Not only does this deny them the rights of their neighbors, it also costs the U.S. billions in tax revenue. Allowing these people to apply for legal status would be a way of handling illegal immigration that is supported by "a wide array of groups on pragmatic, economic, and humanitarian grounds" (Ewing 113). A program that allowed for undocumented immigrants to get legal would bring U.S. immigration policy more in tune with the demands of the economy. Furthermore, as Ewing wrote of the U.S.'s current economic recession, "incorporating currently unauthorized immigrants into our strategy for economic recovery makes far more fiscal sense than spending untold billions of dollars...in a quixotic quest to force them all out" (113). Finally, it's a much more practical plan than the proposition of some immigration opponents to forcibly remove all illegal immigrants from the country. Again, this would cost the country \$551.6 billion in annual spending and \$245 billion in annual economic

output (Ewing 114). Granting these illegal immigrants legal status is much more practical than kicking them all out.

Another seemingly realistic policy change for the U.S. would be to start giving work visas to any immigrants that can show they will have a job upon entering the United States. This program would be similar to current temporary worker programs, but unlike these programs, workers would be able to stay as long as they like (provided they remain employed) and change jobs as they see fit. Here is a perfect place for political compromise with the political right, which would most likely oppose such a policy. First, immigrants could be required to show proof of employment before receiving government benefits, effectively eliminating the freeloader problem. Second, the government ID cards proposed by Republicans that would notify employers of workers' legality seems appropriate in this situation. Technology will enable the use of the cards, and every citizen of the country could have an electronically verifiable ID number, much like a social security number. Another compromise could be to gradually implement immigration liberalization by slowly allowing more immigrants into the country to work each year. This would ensure that there be enough work for new immigrants upon their arrival. It would also help to decrease any burden on government goods and services that a completely open border may bring. Of course, the amount of immigrants allowed into the country on a yearly basis would have to be much higher than the arbitrary quotas set today. Leading economists could be consoled so that the new immigration policy would be more in tune with labor market demands. And since the U.S. would be easier to get into, these people could return home more easily when they were done working. The circular immigration this policy encourages would be even more effective if the U.S. included free movement of labor in its free trade agreements with other countries.

The European Union could be a model for even more liberal immigration policies once support for immigration become more popular with U.S. citizens. The European Union currently allows for the free migration of all citizens of its member countries. However, this means that countries need to decouple sovereignty from a country's ability to block immigration. As Casey asserts, "the ability to control immigration (but not capital, goods, foreign policy, etc.) should not be idealized as a mainstay of sovereignty" (43). For a change in immigration policies to take place in a democratic country like the U.S., there

must be a change in public opinion. This needs to be done by educating the population on how immigration will benefit them. Maloberti writes that in democracies where individual votes are usually indecisive:

few individuals find it profitable to invest in the costly process of understanding the unintended effects of popular policies...trade restrictions, burdensome regulations, and high taxes, for example, have important effects on prosperity. Yet individuals wrongly think that such government interventions are able or necessary to increase their collective welfare. Individuals prefer misguided policies simply because they tend to be more intuitive, and interest groups prefer such policies because they benefit them (552-553).

This seems to be exactly the case with immigration; people's intuition is that immigration is a zero-sum game, when in reality it is a positive sum game. The burden of educating the American population on this concept will undoubtedly fall on immigration interest groups. But the population can also call on politicians, professors and business leaders to take a more pragmatic, fact-based approach to immigration rhetoric.

Once the American population changes its stance on immigration, the country should work to enter into bilateral free trade agreements that include the free migration of labor. Such agreements already exist in global politics. Aside from the EU., the Caribbean Community, the Nordic Council, and the Trans Tasmanian Arrangement between Australia and New Zealand, are all examples of what Casey calls "comfort zones" in which labor is allowed to move freely (45). These policies have not created the strife that immigration opponents claimed they would. In fact, EU citizens listed "freedom to travel and work" as the greatest achievement to date of the European Union (Guskin and Wilson 135). For America to enter into free movement of labor agreements, it will have to give importance to economic interests over what Casey calls "the politics of fear" which today seem to dominate immigration rhetoric (45).

## CONCLUSION

As Maloberti writes on immigration, "there are no good reasons for preventing the entry of those who merely intend to advance their own well-being within the constraints imposed by

respect for other people's rights" (561). Not only would freer migration improve America economically, it would also improve the standards of living of countless poor people who decide to immigrate as well as the lives of those who reap the benefits of the free trade of labor in their home countries. Just as the liberalization of trade increased wealth across the world and helped to reduce poverty, so too could the liberalization of immigration. According to a World Bank report, if developed countries were to let in just 14 million immigrant workers the "world economy would yearly generate, *ceteris paribus*, \$365 billion over a 15 year period (2010-2025)". Of this \$365 billion, immigrants would yearly gain \$162 billion, citizens remaining in developing countries would yearly gain \$143 billion, and natives in immigrant receiving countries would gain \$139 billion per year (Zientara 71). So, according to the World Bank, every part of the world would benefit economically from freer migration, rich and poor alike. To again make a utilitarian argument the improved lives of immigrants would create a huge amount of happiness, as would the economic gains enjoyed by the entire world. This happiness would certainly outweigh the unhappiness created by immigrants moving to parts of the world where native citizens do not want them. It would also outweigh the unhappiness brought by the eyesore of immigrants living in conditions poorer than what developed country citizens are accustomed to. Immigration liberalization will bring its challenges; more people have to compete to use government goods and services in immigrant receiving countries, but these problems are minuscule when considering the huge economic and moral benefits of allowing people to freely choose where they work.

And paradoxically, as more of the world's poor benefit from the free movement of labor, there will be less need for them to move to developed countries, such as the United States. It is the very existence of immigration barriers that contribute to the poor's need to immigrate in the first place (Maloberti 559). "Open borders should be a driver for less immigration, and those who move should do so out of choice and not because of necessity," writes Casey (53). After all, free migration is seen as a wealth equalizer. Many of the developing world's poor would see their need to immigrate fall as the benefits of free migration create economic growth in their home countries.

It is not as if a policy of open borders would be new to America. For its first 100 years of existence the country had an open immigration policy, allowing in anyone who could pass a

health check and afford a ticket to come to America in search of a better life. During this time there were also those who opposed immigration for many of the same reasons as today. Yet it was this period of free migration that propelled America to the prosperity and influence that it now has. Today, America can benefit again from policies much like it had in its first 100 years. The country owes its greatness to the huddled masses, which came in search of the American dream. In fact, it is these immigrants that were willing to leave everything they had for a shot at a better life; they truly believed in the American dream and the dream needed their intensity to hold true. Immigration has been fundamental to America since its beginning and it will remain fundamental to its prosperous future. It was Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence, that wrote of "the natural right which men have of relinquishing the country in which birth or accident may have thrown them, and seeking subsistence and happiness whosoever they may be able" (Ebeling). Today, developed countries, the United States included, have the chance to fulfill Jefferson's wish and grant the right to find a better life in a new country to all of humanity. Will this pragmatic, economic and ethical right come to be in our generation? Or will we find our immigration policies making the same uneducated mistakes as those of past generations?

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