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Imagining America with no immigrants

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Let's, for a moment, take Donald Trump at his word and say that it is possible to peacefully and swiftly remove some 11 million people from America's cities and towns. Let's concede it would be possible to stand up and fund a deportation force to achieve this end, and that it is also possible to keep families together by removing them entirely. And once on the other side of a huge wall, the deported would watch from a distance as America became great again.

What then? What would be the immediate and long-term consequences for US society? For the American economy? For everyone left behind?

Below are a few likely scenarios in a day-to-day life free of "illegals."

■ **Restaurants would be shuttered.** In fact, approximately one in five eateries would not be able to get food out of their kitchens. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, one-fifth of the nation's chefs, head cooks, and cooks are undocumented. And nearly a third of the dishwashers are also undocumented. "They'd be up the creek," chef and author Anthony Bourdain said of restaurant owners in a recent interview. "It is really, really getting hard to find people to do the jobs."

■ **Fruit and vegetable shortages.** Imagine panic in the aisles of Whole Foods without the men and women who harvest California's fields and vineyards. Growers simply can't find enough documented citizens willing and able to do the work.

■ **A construction slowdown, particularly in home building.** Immigrants are playing a growing — and very specialized — role in the US building business. Undocumented workers hold 34 percent of all jobs in drywall installation, 27 percent in roofing, and 24 percent in painting. Tens of thousands of homes would be stranded mid-construction. "Affordable housing" would acquire a completely new meaning.

■ **Lawns gone to seed.** In Boston, lawn crews are often composed of Central American immigrants. Take them away, and homeowners in the suburbs would face a bidding war for landscaping work. (And let's not forget Donald Trump's coveted fairways.)

■ **The end of newspaper delivery.** As we at the Globe learned the hard way, individuals making not much more than minimum wage work as contractors delivering daily papers. This arrangement isn't limited to the Globe, and many deliverers are undocumented.

Bigger picture, removing undocumented workers could suck some \$250 billion out of the economy annually, according to a 2012 Cato Institute study. Ten percent of Nevada's workforce population would evaporate. Nearly 3 million people in California's workforce alone would migrate away, leaving a stunning economic void.

UCLA professor Raúl Hinojosa Ojeda, an economist and political scientist, estimated the US gross domestic product would lose \$2.6 trillion over 10 years. “The incredible irony of this situation is that the typical Trump voter — older, less educated, white male — is the one who benefits the most from undocumented immigrants. Remember, they don't compete for the same jobs,” says Hinojosa. “These irregular status workers provide direct goods and services that are making the lives of older, white males more affordable. . . . Not to mention that undocumented workers are paying into the Social Security system that will sustain this old, white, aging population.”

And there would be a political void as well. When the economy fell apart, who would be left to blame?