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Rare Occurrence: A Balanced Immigration Panel

By *James R. Edwards Jr.*
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I recently discussed a Christian view of "Immigration & the Workforce" at a panel sponsored by Nyack College's Washington office. Nyack deserves credit, especially on one count: This panel was actually balanced: two speakers advocated amnesty and two opposed amnesty.

This is definitely a rarity. For example, the Senate Immigration Subcommittee held a lovefest in the guise of a committee hearing just before September 11, 2001. Pro-amnesty senators gushed how tremendous it was to have such "broad" support from witnesses ranging from the AFL-CIO to the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. Of course, anybody with a clue knows that Big Labor and Big Business, just like Big Religion and others, from the Cato Institute on the Right to the Soros-funded Center for American Progress on the Left, regularly work together for amnesty and open-borders policies. That panel represented groupthink about as fully as could be put together.

On this Nyack panel, Vanderbilt law professor Carol Swain and I articulated similar views on the side of the issue that's usually underrepresented at such events. We maintained that having 7 to 8 million illegal aliens in the U.S. workforce hurts the most vulnerable Americans – in direct job competition and job displacement and in wage depression. Professor Swain approached it from the rule-of-law and national sovereignty perspective, while I addressed it in terms of prominent biblical principles and simple economic and labor market facts.

The open-borders/amnesty position was espoused by Richard Land, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, and by National Association of Evangelicals lobbyist Galen Carey. If you've heard Land's remarks at pro-amnesty press conferences, congressional hearings, or elsewhere the past few years, you've probably heard the same bromides and laugh lines already. Carey, whose background includes a stint with refugee agency World Relief, at least had some novel – though largely anecdotal and inordinately unsupported by evidence – opinions. Neither got their minds around the simple concept of the labor supply/wage relationship, and both remained doggedly wedded to legalizing 12 million alien intruders regardless of any adverse effects this would impose on our fellow Americans at the lower end of the

economic ladder, including native-born high school graduates, blacks, and blue collar families (not to mention the breathtaking fiscal costs).

Unfortunately, the lack of knowledge or understanding of the intricacies of immigration policy and its wide-reaching effects in economic and fiscal matters stood out with those two speakers. They accumulated over the course of their remarks, both formal and Q&A responses, a heap of misstatements, inaccuracies, and just plain wrong things. For instance, Carey said the U.S. only admits 10,000 unskilled work visas a year and implied that that visa category's limit stymies pent-up demand among unskilled, uneducated foreigners who want to take a job in America, hence driving up illegal immigration.

In truth, those 10,000 are permanent residency visas. At the same time, we have several unskilled temporary work visas like H2A and H2B that account for an extra 150,000 imported workers a year. H2A is uncapped! The government churns out work visas – permanent and temporary – for unskilled foreign workers. The recession hasn't slowed the government's pace of doling out work permits to foreign job competitors, to the tune of 1.5 million a year. Roy Beck at NumbersUSA has quantified this profligacy [here](#).

The folks at Nyack College have set a precedent that, hopefully, others delving into immigration issues (from a faith perspective or otherwise) will follow. (Don't hold your breath.) Having a range of views represented, as well as balance among panelists' general views, could actually facilitate honesty, thoughtfulness, and headway on policy dealing with a controversial issue.

As it stands, elites generally are elitists. They prefer to speak with one another in echo chambers.

The Center for Immigration Studies is an independent, non-partisan, non-profit research organization founded in 1985. It is the nation's only think tank devoted exclusively to research and policy analysis of the economic, social, demographic, fiscal, and other impacts of immigration on the United States.



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