



Tear Down The Walls: The Case For A Bigger Community

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February 9, 2019

The issue of “border security” has dominated American domestic politics since second-generation immigrant Donald Trump — who has been married to two immigrants — declared his candidacy for president in 2015. It has eclipsed more pressing matters and even resulted in a partial shutdown of the federal government at the start of 2019.

The debate has dealt almost entirely with “securing” the U.S.-Mexico border against entrance by Latinx migrants; there is far less concern about controlling the much longer border with primarily white Canada. But it has not really been much of a debate at all. Policymakers are arguing over the severity of migration restrictions; there has been no discussion over whether such restrictions are in the nation’s best interest in the first place.

The U.S. had an open-borders policy in all but name until 1924 — the racist Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the lamentable exception — during the nation’s rise to economic and global strength. It is time to return to the principle of free migration.

Restrictions on Movement are Both Illogical and Immoral

“Imagine not just opposing President Trump’s wall but also opposing the nation’s cruel and expensive immigration and border-security apparatus in its entirety,” New York Times columnist Farhad Manjoo wrote in January. “Imagine radically shifting our stance toward outsiders from one of suspicion to one of warm embrace. Imagine that if you passed a minimal background check, you’d be free to live, work, pay taxes and die in the United States. Imagine moving from Nigeria to Nebraska as freely as one might move from Massachusetts to Maine.” 1

No one is able to choose whether to be born in a country that is rich or poor, free or oppressed, at peace or at war. It is very hard to build a moral case for why someone born on the north side of a line drawn after a war or a treaty of acquisition or — in the case of the 1854 Gadsden Purchase — to make it easier to lay a railroad should have more basic rights and liberties than someone born to the south of such a line.

George Mason University economist Bryan Caplan has called immigration restrictions “government-required discrimination against people who have done nothing more than be born in another country,” His George Mason colleague Alex Tabarrok is blunter: “Closed borders are one of the world’s greatest moral failings.” 2

Low Risk, High Yield

The moral case is clear. What, then, of the case for public safety? Crime rates are significantly lower among immigrant populations — both documented and undocumented — than among the native-born population.³ And the Cato Institute has calculated that “the chance of being murdered in a terrorist attack committed by a chain immigrant or a diversity visa recipient” is 723,000,000 to one.⁴

Opening borders would also open up economies. The Economist reported in 2017 that if all international restrictions on free movement were eliminated, the world “would be \$78 trillion richer.”⁵ Free movement spurs innovation, which creates jobs. George Mason President Ángel Cabrera notes that four out of 10 U.S. Nobel laureates in physics, chemistry, medicine, and physiology since 2000 were immigrants. Immigrants or their children founded a similar proportion of Fortune 500 companies.⁶

It’s Time to Shift Our Thinking

Citizens for Global Solutions embraces the notion of world peace through federal world government. Just as our nation has state governments that deal with their own local problems and a national federation to deal with national problems, so countries should have their national governments to deal with own national problems while the global community should have a world federation to deal with global problems. When our country began, everyone had to shift their thinking from what seems good only for their own state to thinking also about what is good for the country as a whole. Now everyone needs to shift their thinking again, this time from thinking only about what seems good for their own country to thinking also about what is good for the world community as a whole.