



On immigrants and refugees in the Age of Trump

Andrew W. Griffin

June 22, 2017

Last Saturday, *The New York Times* featured a pretty damning op-ed from Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bret Stephens titled “Only Mass Deportation Can Save Us.”

Unsprisngly, Stephens' column outraged many on the right, including Tucker Carlson, the bow-tie wearing rightist who dismissed Stephens' comments as "mediocre" and part of a "dying newspaper."

Of course, we should note that the *Times* gained 276,000 new subscribers once the "Age of Trump" kicked off. Of course Trump always liked to say the paper was "failing" and run by losers. The facts are far different, it would seem.

Reading it several times, it's clear that this talented columnist, formerly of *The Wall Street Journal*, injects some instances of satire that goes completely over the heads of Carlson and the others who are afraid of change and of losing their position at the apex of the societal pyramid.

Stephens, a conservative of note, essentially suggests that in order to save America, lazy, entitled, native-born Americans are the ones who should be deported – not the hard working, business-creating immigrants who take education seriously and are more likely to stay out of trouble. Stephens notes how the Cato Institute, the libertarian think-tank, revealed that non-immigrant Americans are “*incarcerated at a nearly twice the rate of illegal immigrants, and at more than three times the rate of legal ones.*”

Numbers to think about.

Stephens continues (tongue-firmly-planted-in-cheek?) “*Bottom line: So-called real Americans are screwing up America. Maybe they should leave, so that we can replace them with new and better ones: newcomers who are more appreciative of what the United States has to offer, more ambitious for themselves and their children, and more willing to sacrifice for the future. In other words, just the kind of people we used to be – when ‘we’ had just come off the boat.*”

Stephens sees complacency and ignorance as being rife throughout the self-satisfied American culture. Intellectual pursuits are downplayed while sports and entertainment are hailed as being

more important than anything else in life. Just go through the checkout line of an average supermarket and see the magazines offered. Where *TIME*, *Newsweek* and other news magazines held center stage, have been replaced in the checkout lines with "trashy tabloids" that have up-to-the-minute reports on fad diets, celebrity divorces and the state of Kim Kardashian's ever-expanding buttocks.

But as a society, we let Big Business know what we want. Deep down it seems Americans are both unhappy *and* spoiled. And the number crunchers see an increasingly lazy, complacent and civically-unengaged society that has no clue where they are going, only that looking down and "praying" to their smartphone will ultimately save their souls, as the walls come crashing down around them. I think Bret Stephens sees that and felt his piece was relevant and necessary.

The newcomers, however, do have that drive that America used to have. This nation of "doers" needs immigrants. It should embrace refugees. It's striking that the "Make America Great Again" crowd doesn't seem to understand that part of the equation.

Donald Trump on the campaign trail in Oklahoma City in 2015, w/ *Duck Dynasty's* Willie Robertson. (*Sarah Hussain / Red Dirt Report*)

Look at Oklahoma City's south side. Look at this [new story](#) from *Red Dirt Report's* Bill O'Brien, reporting on an immigrant family from Nigeria who have opened a supermarket catering to African immigrants and others who love the food and offerings from that continent. It is immigrant families like the Azees who are contributing to America's bright future - one that features more and more people born in other parts of the world.

And while our neighbors to the north, in Canada, [have been embracing refugees](#) from war-torn Syria, the U.S. has been more reluctant to do so, [falling back on decades](#) of anti-Arab sentiment, xenophobia and not-so-cloaked racism, here in the dark age of Trump.

But we have done it before. We can be a welcoming nation, state and city. And for the newcomers, let's help them become civically engaged and welcomed into our society. In the end, everyone wins.

Looking for help? Catholic Charities, here in Oklahoma City, has [a page](#) on their website informing folks about "refugee resettlement" while [The Spero Project](#) (reported on [here](#), last fall, by Louis Fowler) "does a lot of work with the Oklahoma City refugee community." A city that has embraced refugees [at least since the Vietnam War era](#), when OKC began embracing refugees from Southeast Asia, helping to build what is now the city's Asian District.

"They are an awesome part of our Oklahoma culture," [said](#) U.S. diplomat to Vietnam Bryn Cain West, to the Bricktown Rotary Club in 2016, referring to the Asian immigrants in that district of the city.

As reporter Bill O'Brien [noted](#) in 2015: "(O)n a recent CNN program that studied the Syrian Refugee problem, former President Bill Clinton pointed out that most of those refugees are skilled young people who are distrustful of any type of extremism and that all Western societies, including the U.S., need young people to help support their aging populations."

As Bret Stephens concluded in his strongly-worded piece: "*We're a country of immigrants - by and for them, too. Americans who don't get it should get out.*"

Yes, a bit extreme - almost an "America - Love It Or Leave It" sentiment - but twisted in favor of the non-nativists out there who want a chance to build a business, start a family and be part of this amazing patchwork quilt called America.

Let's really start having that conversation.