



Recalled Sen. Pearce gets full page in Arizona Republic to lie about immigration reform

May 23, 2013

I couldn't believe it either. Two weeks before the Senate Judiciary Committee's historic 13-5 vote on the Gang of Eight's immigration reform bill, the *Arizona Republic* featured two guest editorialists to debate the legislation. However, rather than invite a halfway sane critic of the bipartisan measure to represent the "NO" position, the *Republic* handed over a full page to disgraced former Sen. Russell Pearce, whose documented racism (comparing, for instance, Mexicans to lepers) was even too obnoxious for the ultraconservative voters in Mesa, who recalled his nativist ass in 2011. Stephen Lemons at *New Times* asked the obvious question:

Gee, what will the *Rep* do to top this dumb stunt? Maybe they could get David Duke to comment on race relations, Eliot Spitzer to pen a piece about the scourge of prostitution, or Bernie Madoff to write a column on how to invest your excess cash.

The *Arizona Republic* must be very proud, giving so many column inches to a gutter snipe who hung out with white nationalists like J.T. Ready, a brownshirt who used to patrol the desert looking for Mexicans with other armed militia dickheads. Poignantly, Pearce's May 12 editorial appeared almost to the day of the one-year anniversary of J.T. Ready's murderous rampage, when he killed a family of four, including a baby, before putting a handgun to his own sick skull.

It's the gun-hugger cronies of Ready and Glenn Spencer, another Pearce ally who operates American Border Patrol, that used to comprise the listening audience of Pearce's "Ban Amnesty Now" Phoenix radio program, which happily is "on hiatus" and begging for sponsors. Like Limbaugh, advertisers fled the hate-filled hour and KFNX-AM dropped Pearce. He remains, however, president of Ban Amnesty Now, a clown car full of hatemongers so far to the right on immigration policy that they don't even accept commonsense and humanitarian starting points, such as:

- 1) There is no feasible way or reason for the government to identify, round up and deport all 11+ million undocumented immigrants in America.
- 2) Immigrants contribute economically and culturally to the nation.
- 3) Children who were brought to America by immigrant parents should not be ripped from the only friends and home they've known and sent to a country where they don't even know the language, let alone have any social or job contacts.

Pearce rejects all three:

- 1) He'd love to see the government spend its resources ferreting out every "illegal," booting them from the country and building a 200'-high electrified border wall guarded by armed patrols, drones and alligator-filled moats.
- 2) Pearce doesn't give a shit about other cultures, and, like Jason Richwine and other scumbuckets at the Heritage Foundation, he considers them a trillion-dollar drain on the economy.
- 3) Too bad kiddies, you're "illegal" so get out! Pearce would even change the 14th Amendment so children *born in the U.S.* of undocumented parents, which he and Steve King-Louie Gohmert lackeys call "anchor babies," are not granted citizenship.

Let's look at what Pearce wrote over the bump.

Russell Pearce, it must be noted, is psychologically incapable of *not* spewing bigotry. As a young man he worshipped at the feet of Cleon Skousen, whose lectures Pearce attended and whose fearmongering books he absorbed. A far-right Mormon who made Joe McCarthy look tolerant, Skousen, a rabid John Bircher, was eventually disowned by the LDS Church because his warped views were even too toxic for that conservative bunch. In books like *The 5,000 Year Leap*, mentioned often by Glenn Beck, Skousen says the U.S. Constitution was divinely inspired, but that it's being undermined by communists, feminists, homosexuals, immigrants and other impurities. In Skousen's alleged mind, the fraying Constitution can only be saved by white Mormon men. Enter Russell Pearce. It's not too difficult to connect the dots between Skousen's hateful hysteria and Russell Pearce's SB 1070, the "papers please" law that he authored. We're trying to save democracy here folks—brown people need not apply. Skousen's theocratic nativism drips from every word in Pearce's *Arizona Republic* editorial. The former President of the Arizona Senate begins by taking credit for the downturn in crime since SB 1070 was signed by Gov. Jan Brewer on April 23, 2010:

The 3-year-old Senate Bill 1070, America's toughest anti-illegal immigration law, has had a dramatic impact on Arizona. We are a better place.

Please consider: In early 2009, an ABC News report called Phoenix "the kidnapping capital of America, with more incidents than any other city in the world outside of Mexico City." The number of reported kidnappings has dropped significantly since 2008, and other crime statistics have improved. Also, taxpayers have saved millions of dollars in K-12 education and social costs with fewer illegal aliens in classrooms and receiving services.

Now hold on there! SB 1070 was gutted by the courts within three months of its signing. In July 2010, U.S. District Judge Susan Bolton agreed with Obama's DOJ and issued an injunction that blocked key parts of the bill, and two years later the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the ruling. So how could SB 1070 have such a sweeping impact on crime if most of it was neutered?

Also, the 2009 ABC News report about Phoenix being the "kidnapping capital of America" was certified bunk. First, investigations showed that the numbers were inflated, and only 48 percent of the reported kidnappings fit the definition. Second, the reason the city's kidnapping rate declined had less to do with SB 1070 than a \$2.4 million federal crime-fighting grant that Phoenix officials applied for and received. That's your federal tax dollars at work, but Russell Pearce wouldn't want you to know that. SB 1070 was responsible!

Remember too that crime across America has declined since 2009, so is Pearce going to take credit for that too? And that money he thinks Arizona is saving by *not* educating immigrant children? What's going to be the cost to taxpayers when these uneducated kids become unemployable adults?

Pearce then dredges up the same rightwing statistics he's been blathering for years, arguing that the cost of immigration is in the billions, if not *trillions*, of dollars:

According to information from the Federation of American Immigration Reform, Arizonans pay \$2.6 billion per year to educate, medicate and incarcerate illegal aliens. According to the Heritage Foundation, the billions we pay today are but one-third of our eventual tab a decade from now if the "Gang of Eight" immigration bill becomes law.

The statistics from the Federation of American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a hate group spearheaded by another white supremacist and eugenicist, John Tanton, have been totally debunked, but that doesn't stop Russell Pearce from citing the bogus numbers in every speech he gives, in every claptrap editorial he writes. Setting aside for a minute the fact that Arizona's *entire* budget is just over \$8 billion, nearly half of Pearce's \$2.6 billion is the cost of educating children *born in the U.S.* of immigrant parents, i.e., American citizens! Also, the figure assumes that the 400,000 or so undocumented aliens in Arizona pay no taxes, whereas a Pew study found they paid more than \$430 million in state taxes in 2010.

Presumably, the Heritage Foundation reference is to Jason Richwine's bigoted broadside that claims The Gang of Eight's reform bill will cost taxpayers more than \$6 *trillion*, an outlandish figure that assumes most immigrants are low-IQ "takers" on welfare—a study that's been trashed, even by conservative columnists. The Congressional Budget Office also reports that the Senate's reform bill will not add a dime to the deficit, but that doesn't stop Russell Pearce from citing Richwine's racist "research"—or the *Arizona Republic* from printing it.

The truth is, SB 1070 *cost* Arizona's economy after tourists and businesses in the rest of the nation woke up to the law's implications and said fuck no.

Cancelled meetings and conferences over the next two to three years would have supported nearly 2,800 jobs. The cancellations will trigger more than a quarter billion dollars in lost economic output and more than \$86 million in lost wages. [my bold]

Even conservative groups agree that the law hurt Arizona. A Cato Institute study found that more than 200,000 Hispanics fled Arizona when the "papers please" legislation became law, taking their jobs and spending power with them to friendlier states. When confronted with numbers that show Arizona's economy suffered from SB 1070, Pearce will just say he doesn't care: even if the "papers please" law hurt the economy, it was worth it to rid the state of the brown menace.

Not content to lie about the economy, Pearce turns to what he does best: scare the bejesus out of little old blue hairs in Sun City. Immigrants are coming *to kill you!* (At least he didn't mention Brewer's lie about "headless bodies" littering the desert.)

And there are other significant costs. More than a dozen Phoenix police officers have been killed or maimed by illegal aliens. Cochise County rancher Robert Krentz was murdered during the debate on SB 1070. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry was murdered near the border, and the list goes on.

Pearce is playing loosey-goosey with the numbers and language here. First, since Phoenix began tracking officer deaths in the line of duty in 1925, 36 policemen have been killed, most were vehicular accidents and only a few deaths have been traced to undocumented immigrants. That must mean the rest were "maimed," but if approximately a dozen officers were hurt by immigrants in 90 years, that's 12 too many but fewer than one incident every 7 years—hardly the Wild West Pearce makes it out to be.

Also, authorities *still* don't know who killed rancher Robert Krentz, and officer Terry was probably murdered by a Mexican national during a botched drug- and gun-running scheme. Yes, bad shit happens on the border, but for Pearce to lump all immigrants with hard-core criminals, for him to suggest everyone coming here for a job wants to shoot cops, is the epitome of racism. That these tragedies occurred "during the debate on SB 1070" has nothing to do with nothing, and had SB 1070 *been* in effect, it would not have stopped the murders of Krentz and Terry.

Pearce ends his editorial with a bullet-pointed stack of lying bullshit:

Anyone who has studied Washington or Congress or the U.S. Senate's recent dealings concerning immigration issues has learned that what senators tell us rarely has any sort of relationship with the truth.

This sham of a bill:

- Grants amnesty to 12 million to 25 million illegal aliens in the United States who arrived before 2012 and puts them all on a direct path to citizenship. All that's required is that the secretary of "Homeland Insecurity" issue plans to secure the border. (Note: Congress is not actually requiring any new border security, just more good intentions.)
- Not only rewards millions of illegal aliens with a path to citizenship, it puts those who entered before the age of 16 on an expedited path to citizenship in just five years regardless of their current age.
- Allows previously deported illegal aliens to apply for amnesty if they are the spouse, parent of child of a U.S. citizen or green-card holder.
- Waives all conditions and grants immediate green cards to amnestied illegal aliens if their case is tied up in court for more than 10 years.
- Grants amnesty, contrary to the senators' initial promises, to employers who intentionally hired illegal workers using fake identification, according to Sen. Jeff Sessions, R-Ala.
- Adds 33 million foreign job seekers, not to the back of the line but mixed completely into the line of 20 million Americans waiting for a full-time job.

Russell Pearce must be thinking of himself when he writes, "what senators tell us rarely has any sort of relationship with the truth," because his points are hogwash. The word *amnesty* appears several times in Pearce's screed, for good reasons: it's a red flag to the base, even though the Gang of Eight's bill has little to do with the apparently *easy* "direct path to citizenship" that Pearce envisions. The fact is, it'll take most immigrants more than 10 years to receive Lawful Permanent Resident Status, after they jump through a shit load of hoops, and during which they can receive no federal benefits—hardly a "direct" path to citizenship.

Pearce also says "*All that's required*" is for Homeland Insecurity (har har) to issue border security plans, then he outright lies and says *no* new security measures are being enacted in the bill. Bullshit! President Obama has already sent twice as many patrols and resources to the border than George Bush ever did, helping to curb immigrant crime and crossings to net-zero, and the new bill appropriates more than \$4.5 billion for increased border security, including additional fences, ariel surveillance and 3,500 new agents. *None* of the reform bill's other provisions will be enacted until the Secretary of Homeland Security verifies that 90 percent of security goals have been realized.

Notice that almost every other bullet point includes the "amnesty" scare tactic, then he repeats as fact another baldfaced lie from Sen. Jeff Sessions. The bills does *not* grant amnesty to employers who knew they hired undocumented workers, *and* the bill "establish[es] significant new authorities and penalties to prevent, detect, and deter fraud and abuse of the H-1B and L-1 visa systems by fraudulent employers." That's just another Pearce fabrication, but apparently the *Arizona Republic* is cool with printing balderdash.

I won't take the time to refute Pearce's other numbers, such as his ridiculous comment that 33 million (!) foreigners will get job preference, but I do want to mention his comment about kids brought here under the age of 16—the DREAMers. Yeah, they can apply for a work permit and avoid deportation if they meet the requirements, so they can then attend college or serve in the military—giving back to their country. Some undocumented men and women have already served in combat; they've given more than Russell Pearce ever did, a Vietnam-era piss ant who spent his entire National Guard stint here in Arizona.