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Welcoming The Next Generation Of Immigrants

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February 17, 2017

Think of what Falmouth might be like without its rich, multicultural history.

Think of what Falmouth might be like if we all looked and thought the same.

Think of what Falmouth would be like if we even felt that we wanted to.

Think of what Falmouth would be like if, back in 1892, Azorean immigrant John Emerald was expelled from Falmouth and the United States because he hadn't undergone extreme vetting. He was the first Portuguese immigrant to buy land for farming, and according to local legend, the first to plant strawberries in the welcoming sandy soil, giving birth to an industry that would last for generations, define a village, and leave an indelible stamp on the history of our community. According to Jennifer Stone Gaines's account published by the Woods Hole Historical Museum and repeated as local lore for generations, John's purchase was soon followed by a similar foothold in the community by Antone Augusta, then John's brother Frank, who purchased acreage on Davisville Road in East Falmouth. Do these names sound familiar? They should. Their descendants continue to be part of the fabric of our community, all because Falmouth welcomed newcomers who were then outsiders and immigrants.

If John Emerald were not welcome in Falmouth because he was an immigrant, the Falmouth of 2017 would be a much different place—and much less rich in many, many ways. Falmouth enjoys—and cherishes—rich cultural, intellectual, economic, and political diversity. John Emerald's story took a parallel track to many contemporaries who came to Falmouth from Cape Verde. Today, those families also contribute to our sense of place, our identity, our economy, and the very soul of our community.

This column is decidedly local, but discussions and policies at the national level have crept their way into our local consciousness, because of the very real potential that current national immigration policies pose a very real threat to Falmouth's continuing its long and storied history of being a welcoming melting pot, and an innovative and introspective community that seeks to expand—not constrict—its cultural bandwidth.

Falmouth is not a community built on fear. Falmouth is not a community that thrives on the xenophobic fallacy that immigrants will cause us harm. Falmouth always has—and should continue—to welcome those in search of the freedom of thought, belief, and free movement around a free society that our democratic republic offers. The fear-based order that would seek to expel those in search of that freedom is based on a broken and tired refrain that those who yearn

to be free also yearn to harm us. That notion is clearly rebutted by the fact that, according to the Cato Institute's Alex Nowrasteh, terrorists born in the seven nations in President Trump's executive order have killed zero Americans in the 40 years they have been keeping track. In his analysis of the current executive order, Nowrasteh notes plainly that, "Trump's executive order further cuts the refugee program to 50,000 annually, indefinitely blocks all refugees from Syria, and suspends all refugee admissions for 120 days. This is a response to a phantom menace." A phantom menace, indeed, that goes well beyond the "safety and security" that the administration robotically touts; our leaders are seeking to bar even visitors, scholars, and workers from coming and contributing.

The solution—our thinking globally and acting locally solution—is clear. Falmouth should become a sanctuary town. We should openly declare that until meaningful and economically sustainable immigration reform is passed, that our community will continue its three-centuries-old standard of being a welcoming place.

Detractors and naysayers offer a specious and dangerous nationalistic argument that rounding up families and deporting them is in our national security interest. That hollow justification for anti-social and intolerant behavior belies the very real, tangible, and provable fact that if, as many (including our nation's CEO) have suggested, we employ "deportation forces" to round up immigrants and send them home, that our economy would collapse. The simple fact they don't want you to know is that millions of workers earn trillions of dollars that are a key underpinning of our global economy. In fact, the World Bank estimates that migrant workers here in the United States send \$134 billion back to their home nations and earn an estimated \$500 billion more that stays in the US, much of it supporting small businesses. Take a chunk of that earning power and economic stimulus out of our economy, and the impact would be catastrophic. The fearmongerers aren't talking about that.

During the Greatest Generation when our nation was at war, a charismatic and beloved president rounded up thousands of American citizens—some of them native-born Americans—and placed them in camps, simply because of their Japanese heritage. With one stroke of his seemingly well-intended pen, President Franklin Roosevelt's Executive Order 9066 resulted in more than 100,000 Japanese-Americans being caged, simply because they looked different and were perceived to be potentially dangerous. Today, that act is acknowledged for what it was—an ill-advised egregious violation of civil liberties and perhaps one of the most un-American and regrettable acts in our history.

Today, a captivatingly enigmatic and perhaps less than beloved president seeks similar action based in similarly reactionary, discriminatory and most certainly flawed logic. However, rather than gather up those who look different and cage them, he seeks to expel them. The result is the same: the whitening of America. This cannot stand. Locally, we can and must do something. There are documented immigrants with visas in our community today who are afraid to leave their homes. I have spoken with them. This policy has struck fear in the hearts of hundreds within our local borders and millions within our nation. That is not consistent with American values. That is not consistent with Falmouth values.

The next generations of John Emeralds are out there, perhaps seeking to come to Falmouth and lead the next great wave of Falmouthites into prosperity and community engagement. We should welcome them and encourage them to be part of Falmouth's future—our future—together.