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Trump wrong about this nation, the immigrants who strengthen it

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I didn't want to write about Donald Trump. He's popular, entertaining and widely praised as someone who tells it like he sees it.

But when what he sees is so wretchedly detached from reality, when it paints a false portrait of a destroyed America then blames this delusion on an innocent population, when it is meant to enrage, divide and destroy what little civility that still remains, and when most of the Republican field shares that vision, write I must.

Trump's xenophobic attacks on America's 11.3 million undocumented immigrants should outrage decent society. They are false. And they are diametrically opposed to our nation's foundational values, not to mention those of the spiritual leader of those who call themselves Christian.

Trump's first big lie is that America is in a state of disaster, an intolerable wasteland and shamed footstool upon which the rest of the world heaps its derision. Is he on drugs?

America is a world-leading power, and has only increased its stature since the collapse of 2008. We came back from the brink and have enjoyed nearly unprecedented job growth. Unemployment is now 5.3 percent, down from a post-crash peak of 10 percent. Personal saving rates have increased from around 2 percent to near 5 percent. For the most part, people are better off than they were seven years ago.

A Pew Research Study shows that a median of 69 percent of people in other nations hold a favorable opinion of the U.S., while 24 percent express an unfavorable view. This compares to 46 percent and 46 percent in the same poll in 2007. America is the most desired country for immigrants from around the world.

Trump should be praising immigrants, for they help make America stronger, not weaker. Undocumented immigrants actually increase employment and wages for native-born Americans, lower crime rates and do not drain our welfare system. So concludes Alex Nowrasteh, immigration policy analyst at the libertarian Cato Institute: "Immigration does not divide a fixed pie of wealth; it increases wealth, incomes and job opportunities for everybody. ... The reality is that immigrants consume much less welfare than native born Americans."

But that doesn't stop Trump, a radical who wants to trash 150 years of bedrock constitutional law by denying citizenship to immigrant children born here. He wrongly says that we'd be supporting them for the rest of their lives. As Nowrasteh says, "Over the long run, their fiscal impact is roughly zero, meaning immigrants and their descendants pretty much pay for themselves."

In fact, undocumented immigrants pay roughly \$13 billion each year into our Social Security Trust Fund and take little in return, helping to keep it afloat for the rest of us, the chief actuary of the Social Security Administration told VICE News.

Finally, the 14th Amendment protects their status as legal persons. They have guaranteed rights to due process and equal protection by virtue of their presence on American soil. While they may have arrived without documentation, they are not in any sense "illegal."

I have met many wonderful undocumented immigrants. Some have literally come to my rescue. They work hard, they are anxious to please and they add great value to our community. They are our neighbors and our friends and they deserve our respect.

Any candidate who will trumpet this reality, seek improvements based on the facts and acts with a human heart will deserve my support. I'm still looking.