

GRAND TOUR

Bully Pulpit

By Bruce W. Cook



All men are not created equal. Our current immigration challenge is proof that the noble expression of our founding fathers was in fact an ideal based on a vision of what humanity might one day embrace as a new and free nation was born, leaving behind the limitations of a monarchy. Permit me to dispel another myth. American citizens do not unequivocally possess or “own” the soil under which this nation stands. We are, instead, tenants, or temporary keepers entrusted with the welfare and preservation of this most precious natural resource. It is not ours because we are somehow entitled. And it is not ours because we took it from the natives, or first established western civilization here. Rather, America belongs to its citizens because we have, over a sometimes tumultuous 400 year history, since the first European settlers established the Jamestown Colony in Virginia, built a nation on principles, laws, ideals, and yes, faith.

In a very real sense, we the people belong more to these notions of righteous existence ever more than we do to the physical territory we define as the United States of America. Keeping this in mind, let’s examine our immigration challenge.

We recognize that we are a nation of immigrants. All of us, every single soul, even the Native Americans who some anthropologists believe came from Asia, are a diverse lot of humanity. So, what distinguishes the established lot from the estimated 12 to 20 million people who have crossed our borders illegally? Why is there so much furor over their right (or lack of it) to be here?

It is because many of these immigrants do not share the American ideals. They share the dream of prosperity and a better life. But they do not share the foundations of freedom as set forth by our tradition. Let us be careful not to include all of our illegal immigrants in this broad stroke. Many aspire to earn the right to American citizenship. Too many, however, do not have either the tools or the mindset to reach this very large goal.

John Smith, the original Governor of the Jamestown Settlement (and his council of leaders) declared that “If you do not work, you do not eat!” Pretty basic stuff in very basic terms. Everyone had to forge their way together.

Today we are afraid to be so basic. Our immigration debate is in fact a national referendum on entitlement. Is everyone, meaning all of humanity, entitled to food, shelter, healthcare, and work because we are a rich nation as well as a just and moral society dedicated to taking care of

the underclass?

Fencing the borders is a very temporary solution. Some might even label it un-American. Others will declare it to be a waste of precious taxpayer funds. What needs to be done to reform our boondoggle of entitlement? Welfare for illegals should be left to the private sector, including religious organizations. Health education, and other taxpayer supported benefits of American society should be shared by those taxpayers, not by illegals. As harsh as it sounds, it is the only way to stem the tide of illegal invasion. As long as America gives, they will come.

In the real world, nations including the U.S. cannot support all who wish to emigrate at any given time. There are quotas—(yes, there’s that word) based on economics. When a labor force is needed, the gates open. We must make citizenship a goal worth reaching for those who are willing to work for the privileges. To this end, we must insist on English as the primary language. Further, we must create programs to educate and train future citizens. An illiterate and unmotivated mass population of underclass workers will bring this nation and any nation to its knees.

We must not be afraid to be honest and tough. To those illegals already here, the American government must require them to learn English, acquire valid work permits and find a path to citizenship with all of its rights, duties and benefits. It’s not simple. It’s not easy. And it’s rife with challenges.

To those wishing to come, we must let it be known that the coffers are empty. We simply cannot support them. They will have to find another way to join the American family. Sneaking across the border will not provide an easy path to a better life.

In the long run the answer is found in the original American ideals; the remarkable power of the individual man or woman to succeed, the ethic of hard work, a commitment to education to open doors and build bridges, and a moral compass to clearly define right from wrong. Any human being with these ideals has the power to be an American. These principles make us the greatest nation. A nation of diversity—all colors and creeds—a patchwork of humanity—not all born equal—but all sharing the inalienable rights to the pursuit of life and liberty—and even happiness. Let us not be afraid to set the standards and to uphold them, to preserve and protect all that distinguishes us from the darker side of the human condition. **GT**

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