

Are immigrants in any sense the saviors of mankind, or of the United States? Many proponents of large scale and expansive immigration policies apparently think so, given their fondness for phrases such as "Immigration is what made America great," and "We are a nation of immigrants."

In support of the first phrase they frequently offer a list of famous immigrants, as former New York City mayor Ed Koch did recently in a column attacking Peter Brimelow and his book *Alien Nation*. Here is Koch's list:

*Are we sorry today that the refugees and immigrants that we welcomed included Albert Einstein, Arturo Toscanini, Madeleine Albright, I.M. Pei, Patrick Ewing, John Shalikashvili, Henry Kissinger, Martina Navratilova, A.M. Rosenthal, Mikhail Baryshnikov, Yo-Yo Ma, Max Frankel, Sidney Poitier, Dr. Ruth Westheimer, Roberto Goizueta, Angela Lansbury and Jaime Escalante? I glory in those names...*¹

But as Jim Robb demonstrates in his lead article, "Infamous Immigrants," one must take the bitter with the sweet. Not all immigrants are great contributors. An evaluation of immigration requires at the minimum a balancing of pluses and minuses.

As to the "We are a nation of immigrants" cliché, it is simply not accurate. A recent Census Bureau report reveals that, at present, about one in eleven U.S. residents is an immigrant. *Per contra*, ten in eleven are not, *ergo* we are a nation of native-born Americans, and have been so virtually from the beginning. Even in the heyday of immigration in the early 1900s the percentage of foreign born in the population did not go much above 20 percent — that is to say, the percentage of native born did not fall below 70 percent.

But that is an aside. How essential are immigrants to our social, cultural and economic progress? Certainly there have been some outstanding examples, as Mayor Koch listed. But the major proportion of our toil, sweat and tears — and innovation — must have come from those who make up the bulk of the populace, the native born.

Can that assertion be tested? One way would be to look over a list of influential Americans and see how many of them are immigrants. While there are many lists of influential books, I have not been able to find an analogous list of influential Americans (and would be grateful for such a reference if the reader knows of one.)

However, such a listing for the whole world, North and South, East and West, has been put forward by Michael Hart in *The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*.² Perhaps a look at the role of immigrants in the human enterprise in general and throughout world history can throw some light on the question of the role of immigrants in the

advancement of our own society.

Hart's book is not as presumptuous as its title might suggest. His method is to write a three to five page essay on each person selected, analyzing the influence the individual had, and giving his reasons for the ranking assigned. His standard has not been simple fame, nor is everyone on the list benevolent — some of the great rascals of history are included. Hart wrestles with the classic question of whether someone else would have invented the light bulb or fought France's wars if Edison and Napoleon had never been born. In the end he invites readers to compile their own lists. This is a nice bedside book that can expose one to a lot of history, and to a good many people that I, at least, had never heard of before.

The sidebar (see next page) contains Hart's list in order of influence on world affairs. I have printed in boldface type the name of each entrant whose notable work in my judgment was done outside his native land. All of the rest made their contributions as native-born persons working in their country of birth.

As is readily apparent, most of these people did their work at home. Of the 21 who made their mark on the world in foreign lands, 11 were military men or conquerors: Christopher Columbus, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Simón Bolívar, Julius Caesar, Francisco Pizarro, Hernando Cortés, William the Conqueror, Charlemagne and Cyrus the Great.

There are five scientists: Albert Einstein, Alexander Graham Bell, Enrico Fermi, Leonhard Euler and Niels Bohr. Of these, only Fermi (who left Fascist Italy in 1938) and Bohr (whose mother was Jewish and who thus felt it prudent in 1943 to leave Denmark) did the work, as emigrants, for which they are known. Einstein's main work was done before he left Europe at age 54; Euler left his native Switzerland at the invitation of first Russia and then Prussia to do his mathematical work, and Bell left Scotland for Canada as a young man and migrated to the U.S. before his career as an inventor started.

That leaves us with three religious leaders who did their work outside their native land: Moses, St. Paul (who made use of his empire-wide Roman citizenship), and John Calvin. Finally, there are two philosophers, if that is the right word for the first of this pair: Marx, who spent his latter years in London where he wrote *Das Kapital*, and René Descartes who chose to live in Holland rather than his native France.

From this we can conclude that from a world wide perspective, and going back through the millennia, most influential people did their work in the country of their birth. Immigration has not been central to the advancement of the human enterprise.

In addition to Jim Robb's essay we present other

examples of "infamous immigrants" in our lead section, hoping — to reiterate our purpose — to aid in the development of a more balanced assessment of the

The 100: A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History

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| 1. Muhammad | 51. 'Umar ibn al-Khattab |
| 2. Isaac Newton | 52. Asoka |
| 3. Jesus Christ | 53. St. Augustine |
| 4. Buddha | 54. Max Planck |
| 5. Confucius | 55. John Calvin |
| 6. St. Paul | 56. William T. G. Morton |
| 7. Ts'ai Lun | 57. William Harvey |
| 8. Johann Gutenberg | 58. Antoine Henri Becquerel |
| 9. Christopher Columbus | 59. Gregor Mendel |
| 10. Albert Einstein | 60. Joseph Lister |
| 11. Karl Marx | 61. Nikolaus August Otto |
| 12. Louis Pasteur | 62. Louis Daguerre |
| 13. Galileo Galilei | 63. Joseph Stalin |
| 14. Aristotle | 64. René Descartes |
| 15. Lenin | 65. Julius Caesar |
| 16. Moses | 66. Francisco Pizarro |
| 17. Charles Darwin | 67. Hernando Cortés |
| 18. Shih Huang Ti | 68. Queen Isabella I |
| 19. Augustus Caesar | 69. William the Conqueror |
| 20. Mao Tse-tung | 70. Thomas Jefferson |
| 21. Genghis Khan | 71. Jean-Jacques Rousseau |
| 22. Euclid | 72. Edward Jenner |
| 23. Martin Luther | 73. Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen |
| 24. Nicolaus Copernicus | 74. Johann Sebastian Bach |
| 25. James Watt | 75. Lao Tzu |
| 26. Constantine the Great | 76. Enrico Fermi |
| 27. George Washington | 77. Thomas Malthus |
| 28. Michael Faraday | 78. Francis Bacon |
| 29. James Clark Maxwell | 79. Voltaire |
| 30. Orville and Wilbur Wright | 80. John F. Kennedy |
| 31. Antoine Laurent Lavoisier | 81. Gregory Pincus |
| 32. Sigmund Freud | 82. Sui Wen Ti |
| 33. Alexander the Great | 83. Mani |
| 34. Napoleon Bonaparte | 84. Vasco da Gama |
| 35. Adolf Hitler | 85. Charlemagne |
| 36. William Shakespeare | 86. Cyrus the Great |
| 37. Adam Smith | 87. Leonhard Euler |
| 38. Thomas Edison | 88. Niccolo Machiavelli |
| 39. Anthony van Leeuwenhoek | 89. Zoroaster |
| 40. Plato | 90. Menes |
| 41. Guglielmo Marconi | 91. Peter the Great |
| 42. Ludwig van Beethoven | 92. Mencius |
| 43. Werner Heisenberg | 93. John Dalton |
| 44. Alexander Graham Bell | 94. Homer |
| 45. Alexander Fleming | 95. Queen Elizabeth |
| 46. Simón Bolívar | 96. Justinian I |
| 47. Oliver Cromwell | 97. Johannes Kepler |
| 48. John Locke | 98. Pablo Picasso |
| 49. Michelangelo | 99. Mahavira |
| 50. Pope Urban II | 100. Niels Bohr |

pluses and minuses of international migration.

Our center section is an eclectic collection ranging from the serious ("Damit die Deutschen nicht Aussterben") to the humorous (by Mike Royko). The articles come from around the world — immigration is not just a North American problem. Our book review section is equally interesting and can save you reading time on volumes with which you will want to be familiar.

We're pleased to report that Jim Robb's article from our previous issue on the Vatican's immigration policy came in for notice in light of Pope John Paul II's visit to the U.S. with his calls for an open-ended U.S. immigration policy. Charity should start at home, with the Vatican leading through example and opening its doors to immigrants — without limit.

John Tanton
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NOTES

¹ Koch, Ed, "In Defense of Immigrants," *The New York Post*, June 10, 1995.

² Hart, Michael H., *The 100, A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*. New York: Citadel Press, 1992, ISBN 0-8065-1350-0, 556pp. [Note: This editorial uses the list from Hart's 1978 edition which is nearly identical to the 1992 list.]