

Mass Immigration: Its Effect on our Culture

Why are the conservatives silent?

by Lawrence Auster

The problem of immigration and the changes it is causing in our culture can be approached from many different angles. We could speak about the redefinition of America as a multicultural society instead of as a nation; or the permanent establishment of affirmative action programs for immigrants based on their race; or the town in Texas that declared Spanish its official language; or the thousands of Hispanics at an international soccer match in Los Angeles who booed and threw garbage at the *American* team; or the decline in educational and environmental standards in areas dominated by Hispanics; or the Hmong people from Laos who bring shamans and witch doctors into hospital rooms; or the customs of voodoo and animal sacrifice and forced marriage and female genital mutilation that have been imported into this country by recent immigrants; or the pushing aside of Christianity in our public life to give equal respect to non-Western religions; or the evisceration of American history in our schools because our white-majority American past is no longer seen as representative of our newly diverse population; or the vast numbers of Muslims established in cities throughout this country who sympathize with the Muslim terrorists and dream of turning America into an Islamic state; or *our own leaders* who, even *after* September 11, keep telling us that the Muslims are all patriotic and

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tolerant, keep warning *us* against our supposed anti-Muslim bigotry, and continue letting thousands of people from terror supporting countries to immigrate into America.

At bottom, each of these phenomena and many more like them are happening for one reason and one reason only – the 1965 Immigration Act which opened U.S. immigration on an equal basis to every country in the world, rather than, as in the past, favoring our historic source nations of Europe. Of course many of the recent immigrants from non-European countries have fitted into America and made good contributions here. It is the unprecedented scale of this diverse immigration that is the problem.

I could easily devote the rest of this article to making a detailed case that the post-1965 immigration is indeed changing our culture in negative ways. But here I want to ask a different question: Why have *we Americans* allowed this to occur? Why are we *continuing* to let it happen? And why, even when we gripe and complain about some aspects of it, do we feel *helpless* to do anything to stop it?

Not the Cultural Left But the Mainstream

Many have argued, most recently Patrick Buchanan, that these things are happening because of the cultural left that hates America and wants to destroy it. There is no doubt that the cultural left hates America and wants to destroy it; and there is also no doubt that the left see mass immigration from Third-World countries as a handy way of achieving that. But that argument leaves unanswered a more disturbing question – why has there been no significant opposition to this leftist agenda? Presumably, the Republican party does not hate America and want to destroy it. Presumably, the conservative movement does not hate America and want to destroy it. Presumably conservative Protestants and parents' groups that have fought against Whole Language teaching and

homosexual indoctrination in the schools do not hate America and want to destroy it. Yet nowhere among these legions of mainstream conservatives and the organizations that represent them have there been any serious calls to reduce this immigration from the non-Western world and the inevitable cultural transformations it is bringing.

Nor is the fear of political correctness an adequate explanation for this conservative surrender. Whatever the power of PC in our society, it cannot account for the fact

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that tens of millions of mainstream conservatives ranging from Rush Limbaugh fans to conservative evangelicals either support the current immigration policy or fail to speak up against it – even in the relative privacy and safety of their own organizations.

We are thus left with a remarkable paradox – that the patriotic and Christian Right supports exactly the same immigration policy that is supported by the anti-American, atheistic left – an immigration policy, moreover, that spells the permanent eclipse of the Republican party and the victory of big government, since most of the recent immigrants vote Democratic.

Indeed, our conservative Christian President, when he’s not busy embracing so-called “moderate” Muslim leaders who are allies of terrorists, wants to expand Third-World immigration even further. But that’s not all. Unlike Republicans in the past such as Ronald Reagan, who supported Third-World immigration on the hopeful

if naive assumption that the immigrants were all assimilating, President Bush actively promotes the growth and development of foreign languages and unassimilated foreign cultures in this country. In a speech in Miami during the 2000 campaign, he celebrated the fact that American cities are becoming culturally and linguistically like Latin American cities:

We are now one of the largest Spanish-speaking nations in the world. We’re a major source of Latin music, journalism and culture. ...Just go to Miami, or San Antonio, Los Angeles, Chicago or West New York, New Jersey ... and close your eyes and listen. You could just as easily be in Santo Domingo or Santiago, or San Miguel de Allende. ...For years our nation has debated this change – some have praised it and others have resented it. By nominating me, my party has made a choice to welcome the new America.

As president, Mr. Bush has not only left in place Clinton’s executive order requiring government services to be provided in foreign languages, he has started his own bilingual tradition, delivering a Spanish version of his weekly national radio address. Even the White House Web site is now bilingual, with a link accompanying each of the president’s speeches that says “*En Español*” and points to a Spanish translation of the speech.

Yet, with the exception of one or two conservative columnists, these steps toward the establishment of Spanish as a quasi-official public language in this country have been met with complete silence on the right, even though opposition to bilingualism used to command automatic agreement among conservatives. If conservatives are no longer willing to utter a peep of protest in defense of something so fundamental to America as our national language, is there anything else about our historic culture they will defend, once it has been abandoned by a Republican president?

What all of this suggests is that mass immigration and the resulting multiculturalism are not – as many immigration restrictionists tend to believe – simply being imposed on us by the anti-American left. Rather, these destructive phenomena stem from *mainstream beliefs* that are shared by most Americans, particularly by conservatives. Of course economic and political forces, and the birthrate factor, are pushing this process in a

variety of ways, but on the deepest level the cause is not material, it is philosophical and spiritual. The reason Americans cannot effectively oppose the transformation of our culture is that they subscribe to the belief system that has led to it.

The Credo That Has Left Us Defenseless

What is that belief system? At its core, it is the quintessentially American notion that everyone is the same under the skin – that people should only be seen as individuals, with no reference to their historic culture, their ethnicity, their religion, their race. Now there is a great truth in the idea of a common human essence transcending our material differences. But if it is taken to be literally true in all circumstances and turned into an ideological dogma, it leads to the expectation that all people from every background and in whatever numbers can assimilate equally well into America.

This explains why patriotic conservatives acquiesce in a policy that is so obviously dividing and weakening our nation. Since the end of World War II, and especially since the 1960s, conservatives have tended to define America not in terms of its historic civilization and peoplehood, but almost exclusively in terms of the *individual* – the individual under God and the individual as an economic actor. For modern conservatives, what makes America is not any inherited cultural tradition from our past, but our belief in the timeless, universal, God-granted right of all persons in the world to be free and to improve their own lives. Therefore conservatives don't believe there can be any moral basis to make distinctions among prospective immigrants based on their culture.

We cannot say, for example, that a shaman-following Laotian tribesman, or a Pakistani who believes in forced marriage, is less suited for membership in our society than an Italian Catholic or a Scots-Irish Presbyterian. And we can't make such distinctions because, from the point of view of pure individualism, our inherited culture does not reflect any inherent or higher truth, and therefore cannot be the object of our love and protection. The only value that reflects higher truth and is deserving of our energetic defense is the freedom and sacredness of each individual. In practical terms this translates into the equal right of all individuals to make their own choices and pursue their own dreams, even if we are speaking of tens of millions of people from alien cultures whose exercise of *their* individual right to come

to America will mean the destruction of *our* cultural goods.

In theory, multiculturalism is the opposite of liberal individualism. In practice it is the direct result of pursuing liberal individualism to its logical extreme. The 1965 Immigration Act was not about multiculturalism. No lawmaker said in 1965: Hey, we *need* Third-World cultures, we *need* female genital mutilation in our country, we *need* Shiite Islam and Wahabbi Islam to fulfill the meaning of America. The 1965 legislators voted to open our borders to the world, not because of a belief in the equal value of all cultures, but because of a belief in the equal rights of all individuals; the single comment most frequently heard in the Congressional debate was

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that prospective immigrants should be chosen solely on the basis of their “individual worth.” But this noble-sounding sentiment was an illusion, because, in the real world, most of the people admitted into America under the new law did not come just as individuals. They came as part of the largest mass migration in history, consisting largely of family chain migration, and inevitably brought their cultures with them.

Thus, in passing the 1965 Immigration Act, we did two fateful things. We announced that we had no culture of our own except for the principle of non-discrimination toward people of *other* cultures — *and* we began admitting millions of people from those other cultures. We started letting in all these other cultures at the very moment that we had *defined our own culture out of existence*.

This delusional act led to the next stage of our self-undoing. In the late 1970s and 1980s, we began waking up to the fact that those other cultures were here, that they were very different from our own, and that they were demanding to be recognized and given rights as cultures. But at that point, what basis did we have to

resist those demands? We had already said that the only thing that defines us as a people is non-discrimination toward other peoples; we thus had no justification for saying that maybe it's not such a great idea to import people adhering to radical Islam or Mexican nationalism into the United States. Having cast aside our own culture, we had no choice but to yield, step by step, to the elevation of other cultures. This is how America, through an indiscriminate and unqualified belief in individualism, ended up surrendering to its opposite – to multiculturalism.

Is Immigration Restriction Immoral or Un-Christian?

What has been said up to this point will offend many conservatives, particularly Christians. For one thing, the Christian church consists of people of every culture and race, so why can't a nation? The answer is that the church is a heavenly organization, it is not responsible, as a nation is, for the defense and preservation of a particular earthly society. Mexico and Nigeria, for example, are largely Christian, but in cultural terms are radically different from the United States.

To believe that all peoples on earth should join our country is the very idea that God rejected at the tower of Babel. God said he did not want all men to be united in one society, because that would glorify human power. If I may presume to say so, God had a more modest idea of human life on earth. He wanted men to live in distinct societies, each speaking its own tongue, developing its own culture, and expressing God in its own way. This is the true diversity of cultures that constitutes mankind, not the false diversity that results from eliminating borders and coercively mixing everyone together, which destroys each country's distinctive character. Consider how today's multicultural London has lost much of its Englishness, and increasingly resembles multicultural New York.

So I would respectfully suggest that when Christians translate the spiritual idea of the unity of people under God into the political ideology that people from all cultures should be allowed to come en masse to America and other Western countries, that is not the traditional teaching of the Christian church, that is a modern liberal idea, that is the *Religion of Man*, which has been infused into the Christian church over the past fifty years.

But if this is the case, how can we reconcile our spiritual unity as human beings under God with our actual

cultural differences? The answer is that in individual and private relationships, people of different backgrounds can relate to each other as individuals, without discrimination of culture and ethnicity. But on the group level, on the level of entire peoples and nations and mass migrations, cultural differences do matter very much and cannot be safely ignored.

Thinking and Acting Anew

It would therefore be a tragic error to limit our thinking about immigration to technical matters such as law enforcement against illegal aliens and security measures against terrorists, as vitally important as those things are. Beyond the immediate threat of mass physical destruction, we face a more subtle but no less serious threat to the very survival of our civilization. As Daniel Pipes writes in the current issue of *Commentary*:

To me, the current wave of militant Islamic violence against the United States, however dangerous, is ultimately less consequential than the non-violent effort to transform it through immigration, natural reproduction, and conversion.

Of course I agree with Mr. Pipes. But, as I've tried to demonstrate, we cannot hope to stop or significantly slow that immigration unless we abandon this contemporary idea that America is defined by *nothing* except individual freedom and opportunity – the idea that America has no particular culture of its own that is worth preserving. Rethinking these beliefs and rewriting our immigration laws accordingly will not be easy, but if we fail to make the attempt, we will simply continue sliding, slowly but surely, toward the dissolution of our culture

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An Essay on Immigration and Multiculturalism

American Immigration Control Foundation
 Monterey, Virginia
 Softcover, 96 pages, \$4.00

"Auster offers excellent insight into the historical background and national psychology that brought the United States to the crisis of immigration it currently faces. The book includes a useful discussion of racism and why it is not racist for countries to defend their culture and heritage. It concludes with a strategy to restore reason to our immigration policy."

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