

# Intergenerational Justice

by Fred Elbel

We often hear about “social justice,” “environmental justice,” “immigrant rights,” and other variations of the concept of justice. The meanings of these terms are frequently obscured, often deliberately. Rather than expressions of rights under the rules of law, such terms are often used to mean conformity to a particular political ideology.

Thus, we see immigrant advocacy organizations blurring the line between “justice” and illegality — between rights duly arising from American citizenship and “justice” for those who violate our immigration laws. The conservative media, seemingly interested in catering to corporate demands for cheap labor, push for huge immigration numbers while downplaying the legality of foreign workers. The liberal media present themselves as the champions of the underdog and promote interests of illegal aliens as if legal status were irrelevant.

And in doing so, the media creates injustices for American citizens. The open borders agenda results in a stream of one-sided heart-wrenching human interest stories that may generate greater reader interest, but which essentially eviscerates the law of our land and abrogates the concepts of justice, borders and nationhood. Justice under the rule of law becomes supplanted by “justice” for lawbreakers — promoted with callous disregard for the concerns of the overwhelming majority of citizens.

Focusing solely on the interests of “justice” for immigrants, both legal and illegal, causes us irresponsibly to ignore the unsustainable society we are creating for future generations. The harsh reality is that with our excessively high levels of immigration, America’s population will double within the lifetimes of today’s children.

In 1965, Congress changed our immigration law, resulting in upwardly spiraling immigration numbers to our

present level, which is nearly six times the traditional, sustainable level. Had we maintained a balance where immigration equaled out-migration, U.S. population would have stabilized by mid-century.

The legacy we are leaving to our children is one where every city will be effectively twice as large, with all the commensurate miseries and demands on our environment — twice as much sprawl, gridlock, congestion, school overcrowding, pollution, and demands imposed upon our farmland and on diminishing aquifers.

Intergenerational justice — the concern about the well-being of future generations — must be given equal consideration to “social justice” for those we invite here legally, and higher consideration than “rights” for those who sneak across our borders.

Who, then, would deny the concept of intergenerational justice? Corporate interests demand only an unending supply of cheap foreign labor. The media are still caught up in promoting open-border agendas. The vast majority of politicians is more concerned about campaign contributions, ethnic vote pandering and the next election.

Generation after generation of Americans traditionally have endeavored to leave their country better than it was. Yet Americans today may be the first to fail this legacy by ignoring the explosive population growth that we see in the daily manifestation of ever-growing symptoms. We are stealing from the future for the sake of present economic gain.

Certainly a tremendous disparity exists between standards of living in the first world and developing countries, including America’s overpopulated neighbors to the south. Yet the solution cannot be to invite all of the world’s poor into our country, because we can only absorb a small fraction. (And yes, realistic solutions must involve strategies to improve living standards of third world countries).

We are approaching the point of no return by overpopulating our own country for the sake of corporate greed and a misguided attempt to solve other countries’ overpopulation problems. The debate about what kind of nation and society we are leaving to future Americans is not occurring, and the silence is deafening.

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*Fred Elbel maintains the website of SUSPS, an organization of Sierra Club members who advocate recognizing population growth as a major factor in threats to the environment.*

America has a right, and indeed an obligation, to openly discuss and shape its demographic future. Yet Americans choose not to confront this terribly important issue, and this selfish action is surely a hate crime against posterity. Future generations of Americans deserve nothing less from us than our full compassion and our every effort to ensure them a sustainable future. •