



“Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...”

These poetic lines, engraved on a bronze plaque beneath the Statue of Liberty, speak to who we are: a nation of immigrants. Until now . . .

As Senate Democrat Chuck Schumer lamented, “Tears are running down the cheeks of the Statue of Liberty.” We’ve turned our backs on those huddled masses. Closed our borders. Separated families. Hardened our hearts.

Or so you would think if you only read the headlines or watch TV news. Just one problem: It’s not true.

The United States still maintains the most generous immigration policies in the world. Generous to a fault...because the overwhelming numbers have stymied our ability to assimilate the huddled masses.

50 million residents of America are foreign-born. In fact, today the United States has more immigrants as a percentage of its total population than at any time since 1890. That’s why, to give one illustration, 176 different languages are spoken among students in the New York City school system.

How did we get here? For starters, America grants permanent residence to a million people every single year. And that’s just the tip of the iceberg because of something you’ve probably heard referred to as “chain migration.”

Chain migration allows immigrants to sponsor not only their immediate family—parents, spouses and children under age 21, but much of their extended family once they gain citizenship: unmarried adult children and any children they might have, married adult children and their children, and brothers and sisters and their children. Princeton University researchers, using the most recently available data, found that immigrants sponsored an average of 3.45 additional relatives each.

So, the one million immigrants granted permanent residence each year potentially adds, over time, another three and a half million.

In addition, an estimated 100,000 refugees and asylum-seekers—people who claim to be fleeing political or personal strife abroad—enter the country annually. From 2008 to 2017, the U.S. gave green cards to well over a million people for humanitarian reasons, allowing them to live and work here permanently. After five years, they can apply for full citizenship.

We're not done yet. In that same time frame, nearly half a million more people came to America through the diversity visa lottery—a program designed to admit more people from “underrepresented” countries into the U.S.

Diversity visa applicants don't need a high school education, job skills—or pretty much anything. And, thanks again to chain migration, spouses and unmarried children under 21 of visa lottery winners also get to come to America.

This non-stop flow of new legal immigrants—based on family ties instead of skills, abilities, and allegiance to American values—has, of course, been supplemented by millions who enter the country illegally and stay illegally.

Dominant media outlets use the euphemism “undocumented,” but the official U.S. government term used in federal statutes is “illegal alien”: an unlawful entrant who came without permission and stays in open defiance of our laws. The number of illegal aliens in the country is usually given as 11 million, but have you noticed that number never seems to change? Common sense suggests it's higher—much higher.

And though illegal aliens themselves don't qualify for welfare, they receive free health care in our clinics and hospitals, and through their American-born children they can expect to receive all manner of benefits—cash aid, food stamps, and housing vouchers. Their children are entitled to a free education in public schools.

Building a high-tech border barrier would certainly help stem this flow. Ending chain migration is another obvious remedy. E-Verify, the national database that allows employers to check workers' immigration status, is also essential. So is a fully-functioning entry-exit system to track visa overstayers.

But all solutions will ultimately fail unless we get control of the numbers and enforce our laws consistently. It's Sovereignty 101: This is our home and we have not only the right, but the responsibility, to determine who comes in, how many come in, and what qualities and qualifications they bring.

The truth is, we let in millions. And, of course, millions more want to come. Who can blame them? But it's simply not possible or desirable to let in everyone. And it's not hateful to say so. It's not hateful to protect our borders. It's not hateful to protect our citizens. It's not hateful to protect our values.

Lady Liberty may be shedding tears—not because we've stopped welcoming immigrants, but because our ill-conceived immigration policies are threatening the American Dream.

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