

Ciongoli concerns himself with the abandonment of traditional Italian cultural values in the area of child rearing, in favor of the so-called “Spock era” method of child rearing as it has been embraced by contemporary Italian-Americans, particularly those who are highly educated. The old values of responsibility to family, independence, and personal fulfillment have been cast aside and replaced by oftentimes contrary values reflected in the so-called “Anglo-Saxon” American population. Woeful to him as well is the rate of intermarriage between Italians and other ethnic groups. Italian-Americans, he maintains, now marry outside of their group eighty-five per cent of the time.


In a highly academic social-science article from the American-historical perspective, the writers reexamine the surprising phenomenon (at least for many traditional observers) of the highly racist elements embodied in legal measures affecting immigrants in traditionally viewed “liberal” countries, particularly the country of the United States. Turning to the concept of liberalism, the authors fashion a useful—albeit narrow—definition of both “liberalism” and “IlIliberalism.” For example, fears concerning “Mexicans” in America combined with those reflected toward “Muslims” in European countries have resulted in punitive measures which shape—so they argue—distinctly racist immigration policies and laws. Another example of such racist measures can be seen in the *Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882*, wherein Chinese were barred for a period from legal immigration to the United States. Fueling such immigration laws between ever shifting and constantly evolving coalitions, represented by the various ethnic groups, are the entities of capital, organized labor, and ethnic interest groups.
Because of the failure by Congress to back the bipartisan Immigration Reform Bill, approved of by both Senators Ted Kennedy and John McCain, the ongoing conflict over the immigration polemic has polarized our nation. Eilemberg stresses the idea that the whole immigration conflict is weighed down by other related issues, such as assimilation, language, cultural identity, and national security. In essence, however, the immigration conflict is ultimately a humanitarian one says Eilemberg—as matters currently stand, some twelve million people are “outed” because of a failure in enacting an effective law and are consequently beyond both the reach and the protection of the law.


Regarding contemporary fears concerning the “Mexicanization” of America, the writer cites a 2007 Pew Foundation Report that claimed twenty-three percent of Latino immigrants spoke English well, but the figure rose to eighty-eight per cent for their children, and to ninety-four per cent for their grandchildren (or the third generation). This fact, however, does not assuage the fears among those Americans represented by the likes of Congressional Representatives Tom Tancredo and Steve King, both of whom support an “English as the Official American Language Law.” In fact, such a measure would severely curtail the ability of many legal immigrants to vote in elections because ballots are translated into their own native tongues. Therefore, passing such legislation would only serve to counteract the existing Voting Rights Act.


The writers quarrel with the notion that proper “assimilation” involves merely knowledge of language and adaptation to native customs and values by immigrants. In fact, they argue that “true assimilation” must also involve the sharing of wealth, status and power. We must examine not only acculturation but also status; in other words, to what “sector” have these immigrants risen? Have they “ascended the economic and education ladders to become members of the American middle class?” Or have they remained mired in low-level, unskilled jobs—in a sense, have they experienced a “downward assimilation?”

Presidential candidates for the 2000 election, Ralph Nader, Pat Buchanan, and John Hagelin, weigh in on several sensitive topics from this election—namely, immigration, Affirmative Action, education, trade with China, and race in America—briefly offering both their insights and their solutions to these “problems.” However, by attempting to cover so much turf in such a brief article, the paper leaves the reader with more questions about the candidates and their positions than it offers answers. Limiting the scope of the piece to perhaps an issue or two might have created a clearer picture of the candidates for potential voters.


The writers examined the phenomena of loss and mourning associated with immigration, with an especial emphasis on Arab immigrants in both Europe and America. Using a three-part television documentary aired by the Al-Jazeera network as a basis for the study, the researchers sought to investigate the responses of Arab immigrants in this documentary to the loss of their native culture. Also, the authors of this piece relied heavily on the Continuing Bonds Model of Mourning to examine reactions of loss to identity, friends, family, language, values, and traditions. Also provided in the article is a definition of “assimilation” as a “process of integration, and not a complete, total, and whole acceptance of a host culture.” Of paramount difficulty to any positive assimilation is the sustained or even permanent “denial” and “clinging” which characterizes the trauma suffered by many immigrants.
Bill Hughes strongly suggests that congress heed the advice of the Black Caucus and end the embargo on Cuba. Of particular irony to him is that the Republicans in congress are sponsoring a bill that will license the sale of food and medicine by private enterprise to Cuba (so long as any sale is not subsidized by the federal government). He opines that the Democrats fear backing this bill because President Clinton, when the governor of Arkansas, accepted twenty thousand Cuban immigrants from Florida with disastrous results for his reelection bid.


According to the authors, for a number of North American and European countries, immigration poses a serious economic and cultural threat to the native populations. However, the writers refute this claim by proving that there is no substantial threat. Immigrants tend to improve their financial status while emigrants tend to worsen their status—at least for the so-called less educated populations. For the highly educated, the economic gains are considerable for immigrants while emigrants suffer a slight decrease in income. Their conclusion is that immigrants, on average, produce gains for both themselves and for “non-immigrant or native populations” as well and that losses suffered are experienced chiefly by emigrants.


Alabama’s new anti-immigration law has resulted in widespread panic in the Hispanic population and in financial chaos for much of Alabama’s business sector. Hispanic homes empty, businesses close, and employers lose workers. Housing and business structures remain unfinished, and crops remain unpicked. Kris Kobach, the Kansas Secretary of State, who fashioned both the Alabama and Arizona anti-immigration laws, approves of the mass exodus of immigrants, saying that this phenomenon demonstrates the efficacy of such legislation. But for others, the economic fall-out is disastrous. Moreover, Alabamans who happen to be Hispanic or to “look Hispanic” are subject to harassment by legal authorities.
Tamar Jacoby avers that the immigration issue has become the largest “hot button” topic aside from international terrorism. According to every major poll regarding immigration and America, Americans indicate a desire for both tougher enforcement of existing laws and also earned citizenship for the estimated twelve million illegal people presently residing here. However, congressmen are attempting to placate a vociferous minority, about twenty-five per cent of the voters, in exchange for their votes by backing harsh and punitive immigration statutes. Rather than be the tremendous financial drain on American taxpayers, a belief supported by popular opinion, illegal immigrants, instead, pay seven billion dollars per year in social security—funds that ultimately go unclaimed. The authors offer a three-fold solution to the illegal immigrant issue: Offer more worker visas to immigrants, affect a much tougher enforcement policy, and create a one-time, transitional measure for illegal immigrants already living here to earn American citizenship.


A question that this researcher sought to answer in this study was “Do high poverty neighborhoods actually serve immigrants as a ‘bridging’ mechanism into the native culture?” Another metaphor of extremes to which the writer availed himself was that of an impoverished neighborhood as a “stepping stone” or a “swamp.” Focusing specifically on Mexican immigrants, Jargowsky was that both economic and social progress was much weaker than that among other ethnic, immigrant groups. Although concentration by particularly Mexican immigrants can shelter them from possible ill effects that nativist may otherwise have on them, this sheltering activity can also inhibit acculturation as well. Although a highly readable essay, this one is also very technical and quite lengthy.


According to Miriam Jordan, the United States is home to some forty million foreign-born residents—both legal and illegal. Moreover, studies by think tanks of both the liberal and conservative bents immigrants who flocked here in the 1990s are assimilating as quickly as other historical large-scale movements by various immigrant groups. Professor of Economics Jacob Vigdor, of Duke University, defines assimilation as “the
process of erasing differences between immigrants and natives over time.” Given this definition, current immigrants are assimilating as well as immigrants ever have. And demographers Dowell Myers and John Pitkin of the University of Southern California claimed that by 2030 seventy per cent of all immigrants will speak English well, and eighty-seven per cent will live above the government-defined poverty level.


John Judis depicts the oftentimes fatal risks that illegal immigrants confront when they cross the border in Arizona. Between October of 2004 and October of 2005, two hundred and sixty-one immigrants died in the desert after illegally crossing the Mexico-Arizona border. Of the two hundred thousand or so illegal aliens who successfully crossed during this period, the vast majority will be overworked, underpaid, exploited, and abused says Judis. However, for native Americans, this whole issue of illegal immigration is a very emotionally charged one, and these emotions are stoked by politicians such as Representative Tom Tancredo, who maintains that this “illegal population” will take jobs from Americans. Moreover, this same population will cause a “Mexicanization” of Arizona and, on a wider scale, will make a “Mexifornia” of the United States, thereby making of it a third-world country. But come they will, regardless of risk, because a farm worker in Mexico can expect to make $3.60 for an eight-hour shift, while in American he/she can earn $66.32 for the same eight-hour shift.


Robert Levine insists that “change” is not “danger” when this change involves the large influx of Hispanics (both of the legal and illegal varieties) into the United States. Those individuals who overly concern themselves with the “blurring of the border” between the United States and Mexico, for example, need not worry about these immigrants not acculturating. Using a number of “thumb-nail-sketches” of the mass immigration into the United States by other ethnic groups in American history, Levine concludes that all of these groups were absorbed into the American culture within fifty years of their arrival. For example, for Italian immigrants who flocked to this country in the period of the 1880s to World War I, by the 1990s’ a full sixty per cent intermarried with other ethnic groups. And for Jews who immigrated during the same historical period as did the Italians, a full fifty per cent intermarried by the 1990s. Though this process of assimilation may take fifty years, Hispanics, Levine concludes, will do much the same as did the Italians and the Jews.

Massey cites a study by the Pew Research Center that claims that Hispanic families saw the largest decline in wealth of any racial or ethnic group in the country from 2005-2009. Although both Blacks and Hispanics were targeted by the recent mortgage scandal, precipitated by predatory lenders, Hispanics’ median wealth fell—relative to Black wealth—by sixty-six per cent. Key to this disparity is the immigration policy, enacted in the 1980s & 1990s. From 1985 to 1995, for every one hundred undocumented entries into the United States, eighty-five per cent of this populated departed. With the passage of tougher immigration laws, illegal immigrants feared being unable to return; hence, they stayed en masse. As a vulnerable population, they are beyond the protection of the law. To avoid such loss of wealth to this population, the immigration laws must be changed.


Nagel reexamines the concept of assimilation as it is studied in the discipline of geography. She argues that professional geographers must look beyond assimilation from spatial terms and, instead, emphasize “discursive and material practices through which dominant and subordinate groups negotiate the terms of social membership.” Moreover, the whole concept of “transnationalism” (the links between the migrants and their homelands—family, language, custom, religion, cultural values, and so forth) must be kept in the forefront of any discussion or dialogue regarding assimilation.


At a recent summit of The National Convention of Indian American Affairs Committee (IAPAC) political activists urged Indians to become more fully engaged in American politics—both as a unified voice and as members of public office. Of particular emphasis during the summit was the appeal to Indians who inhabit the most populous states for this population—California, Texas, Florida, and New York.
Pikovsky, Aysa. “Greater Boston’s Russian Jews torn between assimilation, affiliation.”


Torn between assimilation and affiliation are the approximately 50,000 Jews who reside in the greater Boston area. Russian Jews, according to Pikovsky, inhabit the middle ground between the orthodox Jewish population and the reform group. Before the collapse of the Soviet Union, Jews in Russia experienced suppression of their religious practices and, hence, had to practice devotion in secret. Rabbi Daniel Rodkin, a rare presence in America because he was trained at a Russian-Jewish Yeshiva University in the old country, hosts hundreds of Russian Jews on high holidays, offering the sermon in both Russian and English. He also emphasized the high educational standard that this population has for its children. At the Shaloh House, for instance, a Jewish school that has eighty students enrolled, math scores were the best in all of New England.


This highly academic essay focuses on assimilation as it manifests itself in the nation of Japan. The attitudes towards immigrants in Japan range, so Richey claims, from large anti-assimilation attitude, to a favorable immigration/assimilation sentiment, to an equal rights feeling for these foreigners. Much of the anti-immigrant feeling arises from the inaccurate and highly exaggerated belief that immigrants cause a disproportionate rise in the crime level. Although “lucid,” this, nevertheless, is a lengthy piece rife with graphs and charts and dense with citations.


Eugene Robinson draws a parallel between the anti-Muslim sentiments that fueled the murder of some seventy-six innocent people in Norway by Anders Behring Breivik and the same feelings held by many others in our own country. His message is that “it could happen here.” Although he disavowed any responsibility for Breivik’s slaughter, Robert Spencer was, nevertheless, cited more than sixty times by the killer in his 1,500 page “manifesto.” Spencer, who is the creator of the web site “Jihad Watch,” instead blames the “intolerance” promoted by Islam against all other religions. One important difference between the United States and Europe is that we are protected by the Constitution in matters religious.

In an article very much of the time, Kay M. Siblani interviews John Pappageorge regarding the whole matter of illegal immigration and the controversial English only law. He sharply defines differences between “legal” and “illegal” immigrants stating that the former are generally very well received by native-Americans. Though he attended Greek school as a boy and is fluent in Greek, Pappageorge steadfastly supports the English only statute. He allows that there is tremendous value in being able to speak another language, but that public schools should not be in the business of using bilingual education programs to educate non-English speakers.


In an interview with citizens of Italian descent, Monica Soladay elicits varied responses involving illegal immigration and English-only laws from several Italian-Americans. One man recalled the great pride that his immigrant grandfather had in becoming an American citizen and on his insistence that the family speak “American.” Another man saw a kinship in the language and the customs of Italians and Latinos. Yet another man sympathizes with the conditions that cause people to flood illegally over the border, but held that people must not openly flaunt the laws of the country and must be held accountable for any breaking of the statutes.


Raised in a Jewish enclave in Mexico and educated exclusively in Yiddish schools, Ilan Stavans was a member of a miniscule minority. Ironically, he immigrated to the United States in 1985 to feel more openly Jewish. What he found in coming to the country was a very strong bias against Latinos; in fact, one of his high school students in South Carolina referred to her Mexican classmates as the “scum of the earth,” a sentiment—so he argues—shared by the majority of Americans. Stavans argues that Mexicans, though they comprise 64% of the entire Latino population in America, remain at the bottom of the barrel in a country where things are seen in “Black” and “White” and not in Technicolor. However, studies prove that Latinos are both learning English and assimilating into the mainstream culture at least as fast as other immigrant groups have.

In a series of moving vignettes about immigrant adolescents graduating from high school after the great sacrifices made by them and their families, Stratton reminds the readers that, in fact, immigrants—both legal and illegal—make significant contributions to their adopted country. For example, California State Senator, Gilbert Cedillo states that 90% of the agricultural work, 30% of the work done in service industries, and 20% of all construction labor is done by immigrants. Moreover, the Hispanic Pew Center argues that there is no significant co-relation between the presence of large immigrant populations and unemployment in the ten heavily populated states it studied. And she reminds the reader that immigrants make huge social contributions via such cultural values as a strong work ethic, family strength, community ties, and a strong belief in education.


In a very interesting, albeit brief, historical overview of ESL instruction in the United States from 1910 to the present, Char Ullman argues for the primacy of ESL instruction to the issue of assimilation for immigrants. Such instruction has been both varied and intense—whether it came from ethnic organizations and schools or the YWCA. She also traces the varied reactions of native citizens to immigration groups dramatized legally—from the anti-immigration laws of the 1920s to the Immigration Reform Act of 1965. She emphasizes two key issues in immigration and assimilation: “Transnationalism,” wherein immigrants create a link between their countries of origin and their country of settlement, and “Segmented Assimilation,” in which—depending primarily on the neighborhood for second generation immigrants—may result in either a move upward or downward.


Because of the great economic recession, only 4% of Americans polled consider “immigration” to be the most important issue confronting this country—down from 11% only four years ago. One reason for this change is that the recession brought immigration to a virtual halt. And he also opines that we assimilate immigrants much more effectively than do other countries; for instance, homeownership by immigrants is 20% better here than in Italy, and employment here is 13% better than in the Netherlands. He claims as well that only Canada is better for two reasons: Visas are granted on the basis of education, and dual citizenship is allowed while naturalization occurs in only three years.