
COMMON SENSE II

Capitalizing on the familiarity and influence of Thomas Paine's "Common Sense" pamphlets that provided American colonists with exposure to the conversation of great thinkers in the pre-Revolutionary period, this paper assumes the name COMMON SENSE II. Similarly, today's series of pamphlets strives to give a direct response to great political events and ideas of our time.

February 2019

Immigration Issue

Volume 14 Issue 2

A Wall for All

By Jack Pick

Everyone who pays attention is aware of a potential southern border wall no matter what their feelings are on the subject, so here's a very different approach designed to satisfy all angles.

First, there was the promise that Mexico would pay for this wall, so let's just hire Mexican workers—with work permits, of course—to provide the labor. Minimum wage laws don't seem to apply to migrant workers anyway, so any who complain about low wages can just be sent back across the border.

Then there's the high cost of building materials. No problem! Just have the workers gather field stone and gravel for concrete on or near the site. Someone once said that some crossing the border illegally have large calves—and I assume strong backs, too—so labor should not be a problem.

With proper security this wall would not need to be too high. By security I mean a moat, and while we're at it, this moat would be stocked with alligators thus eliminating the need for high cost border personnel. (I've witnessed high powered border patrol boats speeding up and down the Rio Grande.) The only sustenance required by these highly motivated alligators would be that provided by drug laden traffickers attempting illegal entry.

And finally, access through this border wall would be provided via a drawbridge, controlled of course on the American side. Keeping the spirit with this medieval notion, the drawbridge would be powered by chain and wheel in turn powered by our strong Mexican work force—work permits required.

This should cover all the bases: Mexican involvement, border security, and at little cost to the American taxpayer. Did I miss anything?

Now, I must own and declare full respect and care for all peoples associated in any way with this

wall thingy regardless of birthplace, geographic residence, or politics.



one once said that some crossing the border illegally have large calves—and I assume strong backs, too—so labor should not be a problem.

With proper security this wall would not need to be too high. By security I mean a moat, and while we're at it,



This should cover all the bases: Mexican involvement, border security, and at little cost to the American taxpayer. Did I miss anything?

Now, I must own and declare full respect and care for all peoples associated in any way with this

wall thingy regardless of birthplace, geographic residence, or politics.

The Immigrant

By Vicki Andrews

He looks at his children, sleeping together on the bare dirt floor

Tears in his eyes

He holds his wife close to him one last time
He knows he must leave them to try to save them
But he knows they all may be doomed.

The land—the land he has farmed for years—has dried up
Nothing grows

He has prayed to the Virgin for help for his family, but
No help comes

Should he go to the city and try to find work in the maquiladoras

For pesos a day
Should he head north and try to cross the border
Into the United States?

Maybe there he can earn enough money to send home to his family

And keep them alive
Maybe someday he can send for them to come to him in a new home.

If he can survive the long journey north
If he survive the border crossing
If he can avoid the border guards, the police
The anger of the Americans who don't want him there.
If he can survive the pain of leaving his home, his family
If he can survive...

His heart breaking, he turns and leaves his home and family.



One Legal Immigrant's Experience

By James Raymond

With great anticipation and a bit of anxiety, my now-husband and I attended his K1 visa interview at the U. S. Embassy in Manila, Philippines, on August 23, 2016. Beyond a small, last-minute panic involving printing some missing paperwork at the office of our visa processing agency near the embassy, the day of the interview went smoothly and without trouble. However, this was only a small portion of the long path toward bringing Dennis, my husband, to live with me here in the United States.

Since the Supreme Court of the United States had struck down same-sex marriage bans nationwide only the year before, there wasn't much guidance regarding same-sex couples applying for fiancé or marriage visas abroad, especially in countries where same-sex marriages were not legally recognized. When we made the decision to get married, we had known each other for over two years and had just concluded a month-long trip around Southeast Asia. It was February 2016, and, based on the limited information I could find, the process for same-sex couples should have been handled by the U. S. Government the same as heterosexual couples. That said, my awareness of how certain government officials seemed to put their personal beliefs above the rule of law (I'm looking at you, Kim Davis and Roy Moore) kept my vigilance high. Further, with the looming Presidential candidacy of Donald Trump gaining momentum, both Dennis and I thought it would be wise to proceed with getting married in the event of Trump's election and implementation of anti-immigrant policies.

After months of paperwork, coordination, medical appointments, and patience, Dennis and I were ready for his embassy interview. We were escorted inside the embassy complex, and after what seemed like hours, we quickly progressed through the numerous processing stations. Before we knew it, Dennis had received the thumbs up from the final officer. Approximately ten days later, he received his passport with U. S. K1 visa adhered inside. On September 12, we both boarded our flight back to the United States ready to start a life together.

Fast forward to January 2017, when Dennis and I were summoned to the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) Office in Casper, Wyoming (the branch office nearest our residence) for Dennis' green card interview. Another mountain of paperwork accompanied us on this visit, most of it supporting evidence of the validity of our marriage. The immigration officer conducting the meeting was a middle-aged woman, whose less than pleasant attitude made for an uncomfortable atmosphere in the room. Despite our overwhelming amount of evidence, she further challenged the lack of financial ties (Who knew a joint bank account made for a valid, happy marriage?) as

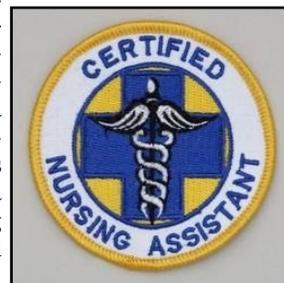
an indicator that we were potentially committing visa fraud. I pushed back, arguing that we had plenty of proof and had followed the required steps for Dennis' application. Begrudgingly, she issued a Request for Further Evidence, which gave us six months to establish and provide proof of joint financial accounts and other "solid" evidence of our marriage's validity.

Of course, I can understand the necessity of some documentation on the part of couples applying for immigration benefits. No doubt, fraud exists and should be addressed. That said, many of the examples of proof wanted by USCIS are items that many American don't regularly utilize and can create an additional financial burden. One item the immigration officer suggested was purchasing a life insurance policy with Dennis as the beneficiary.

Beyond the other inane examples of proof that Dennis and I had to establish after the green card interview—we went directly to the nearest Wells Fargo branch where I added him to my checking account—another hurdle was the financial requirement that the visa sponsor had to show a minimum amount of income over the three years prior to the visa application. I had met this initial requirement without issue. Yet, senselessly, this requirement was suddenly increased by several thousand dollars for the green card issuance. The problem was that, as I had been completing my MBA in 2014, my income was significantly lower than the requirement, thereby blocking my ability to sponsor his green card. Thankfully, my parents were willing to act as co-sponsors for Dennis, allowing him to stay in the country.

Since then, Dennis has become a welcomed member of our community. He holds fulltime employment; he knows and interacts with many locals and is willing to help out with various activities. Though he already holds a bachelor's degree that he had completed long before we met, he is now working toward becoming a certified nursing assistant, helping to fill a critical shortage of needed workers in our healthcare system. His work ethic is to be admired, and I am beyond proud to call him my husband. He epitomizes the benefits of immigration and how immigrants can and do contribute to the betterment of American society.

Later this year, we will once again have to face the immigration system, as Dennis' green card will need to be renewed. We're keeping our fingers crossed that everything proceeds without difficulty. If we are fortunate, 2020 will mark the point at which Dennis can apply for U. S. citizenship. More to come....



**The only reason
you are
A CITIZEN
today is because
your ancestors
believed and practiced
IMMIGRATION**

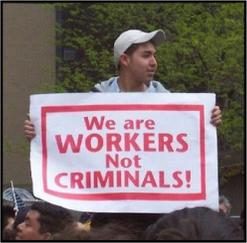
attn:

Immigration Uses and Abuses

By Bob Passi

Immigration for this nation has been an absolute necessity for its growth and development. We are, after all, a nation formed almost completely by immigration. In fact, to claim our dominance we quickly began to destroy the native population with a program of ethnic cleansing of the indigenous populations shortly after our arrival which in some more subtle forms continues today.

As with so many human societies, we began to classify and structure our society according to our biases and our social, political, and economic goals. Immigrants who were most like those who were already here—especially if those who were already here had risen to positions of wealth, power, or authority in the new society—were valued above those who were different. Those differences, such as skin color, ethnicity,



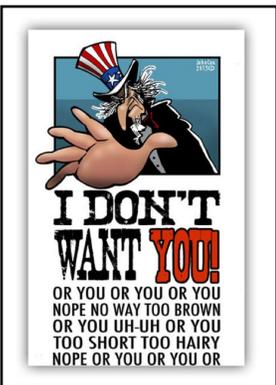
and religion, easily translated into justifications for abuse and exploitation. The lines of superiority and inferiority were quickly drawn to distinguish which groups would be treated with some degree of respect and which would be seen as lower forms of humanity—or not exactly as human at all, *i.e.*, slaves.

So those who “deserved” respect were welcomed as friends and family and allowed access to the benefits of society, and the rest were seen to be of value only as the hired help, in other words, only in economic terms. The expense of keeping them alive and healthy enough to work was seen as a somewhat necessary burden to be diminished as much as possible.



The economic calculus was quickly worked out; the equations of cost of survival versus productivity became commonplace for businessmen. Most of the new immigrants were simply human resources to be exploited as efficiently as possible for the greatest profit.

Eventually laws were put into place to have some control over the flow of immigration, often making it clear which ethnic groups were given respect and which were allowed only as a workforce. Even under those circumstances, that reality allowed what seemed like a better option than what the immigrants had left behind in their countries of origin.



Businesses also welcomed and encouraged immigrants who found ways that sidestepped the laws, sometimes because of imposed quotas and sometimes because it was the only way the immigrant could find to change his/her situation. As these extra-legal patterns were “normalized,” they became a part of the social pattern. The word *wop*, used as a derogatory term for Italian immigrants, meant With Out Papers.

The advantage for businessmen was that those workers could be most easily exploited since they had no legal recourse to unfair treatment. The threat of being turned in or deported kept them in line no matter what. It became a way of doing business, carried on with a wink

and nudge by the authorities, to help business prosper.

That kind of ambiguity has continued, allowing immigrants to be used and abused while providing various justifications to fit the tenor of the times. The society insists that they could not survive without migrant workers to harvest our crops, clean our buildings, and care for our children, although they are really a source of low paid labor—below ordinary market rate. Meanwhile we are willing to demonize them, saying they are trying to subvert our way of life and using them as scapegoats for all kinds of issues such as drugs and crime for which we are unwilling to accept our complicity.

By continuing the ambiguities of the present laws, the exploitation and the occasional demonizing can continue apace, mostly to serve the economic ends of businesses and the political designs of those in power. It is much more powerful as an unsolved issue than it would be after an effective resolution.

We all know how to resolve it.

- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules to accept new immigrants.
- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules for accepting immigrants needing asylum and refuge from violence and untenable lives in their countries of origin.
- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules for a path to citizenship for new immigrants and their children.
- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules for social necessities while they are on their paths to citizenship.
- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules for seasonal or short-term workers and students.
- ◆ We can make an unambiguous, fair, and equitable set of rules for those without papers now, mostly offering a way to citizenship, especially if they have been here a long time.
- ◆ And finally, we can make—and enforce—no-nonsense rules and heavy penalties (like prison time) for businesses and individuals who hire undocumented workers or for those who smuggle people into the country.

Will any of this occur in the near future? Not in the present system that is dominated by an economic elite who control all the levers of power therefore not allowing a resolution of an issue that is too easily exploited for their gain. Immigration is too handy an issue to continue to be used and abused to continue the political chaos.



The voice of the people, the voice of justice and decency, the true voice of democracy will be ignored as long as we continue to try to make the corrective moves within the corrupted and unresponsive, entrenched matrix of power and wealth that continues to destroy the very foundation of a democratic American society.

We must disengage from that system and discover ways to use our numbers and our strengths to create a positive alternative without falling into their trap of acting as if competition, confrontation, and violence were the only means toward a rational resolution.

Immigration can be a source of renewal and creativity for this nation again but only after we return to a democratic and sustainable footing.



Immigration in the United States of America

By Deanna Ensley

I recently visited “The Wall” at Tijuana, Mexico. Years ago, long before all “The Wall” hullabaloo, I had been to Tijuana. That was my first trip to Mexico. It was a blast! It was easy pleasant, and fun! The U. S. Border Patrol was so casual with us back then. I was very pleasantly surprised, having only ever left the U. S. to visit Canada at that time in my life. I have since been to Mexico several times. Each visit was to the Pacific Coast, pleasant, and fun. They all left me with the overwhelming desire to return.

Standing at “The Wall” last week, I felt as though I were standing on a very nice Pacific Ocean beach staring into some other country, not one immediately adjacent to the U. S., not one we have been sharing a border with for centuries. Looking through “The Wall” with its razor wire stretched over chain link fence between us, I felt it makes U. S. citizens feel as though the people on the other side were people of whom to be fearful. Is “The Wall” just protecting us from the people who want to come here to work and seek a better life or keeping us from trying to get into Mexico? Armed U. S. Border Patrol agents stared down at us as if we—all U. S. citizens—were a problem for being there to witness the disgusting barricade and situation. It was as if one wrong move might cause gun fire.

Is Trump trying to make us feel like refugees? Or scare us by not allowing us to approach “The Wall”? Is Trump afraid we might bring the tools to the “terrorists” playing on the beach on the other side of “The Wall”? Does he think we’re going to assist the people of the caravan just immediately on the other side of “The Wall”? Why does Trump want us to hate people from these neighboring countries, the people he looks down upon and of whom, it seems to me, he believes that we “real” U. S. citizens are superior? There are many despicable U. S. citizens; why doesn’t he concentrate on dealing with them? If he is so set on getting jobs for U. S. citizens, why doesn’t he work on problems employer face getting training for them to go to work? Why are we kept back with razor wire and chain link fences as if we were criminals?

We walked about two miles to the exact location “The Wall”



runs into the Pacific Ocean, which looks just beautiful at this location. I had seen people trying to swim around the end on



TV. It looks possible on TV, but the waves and currents are very strong, and the water is contaminated by the Tijuana River. We were told a person had drowned a week earlier trying to get around “The Wall.” “The Wall” is ominous.

I come from northwest Washington, where there have always been Mexican agricultural workers. I am 64 and as a six or seven year old remember Spanish speaking people always being around. We knew they were there to work. Hence, the need for agricultural workers is decades old. The issue of immigration and guess workers is beyond a quick or easy fix, as Trump and his supporters seem to think. Our unemployment rate is as low as it’s been in years. These days whites rarely work in the fields digging onions, picking strawberries and blueberries and flowers, *etc.* Who do you think works in slaughterhouses these days? Who is milking cows for you?

I worked in wage and hour compliance for 16 years. We need workers to do all the work we no longer will; we need people who are proud to do the work we no longer will. There are other people from other countries who come to work here, and some who cause problems. I have personally had many issues with Russian workers and business owners breaking laws. I have had many issues with Chinese business owners not paying workers, in some cases millions of dollars. We hear no word about that from Trump, maybe because he is known not to have paid wages to Polish workers who built buildings for him.

TRUMP'S POSITION ON IMMIGRATION VIOLATES

THE CONSTITUTION

- X The First Amendment
- X The Fourth Amendment
- X The Fifth Amendment

DOMESTIC LAW

- X The Immigration and Nationality Act

INTERNATIONAL LAW

- X The Convention Against Torture
- X The Refugee Convention

ACLU ELECTION 2016

Trump and his advisors need to concentrate on how to integrate workers and/or match workers with jobs, to clamp down on the employers who hire the illegal workers, and then to encourage U. S. citizens to take these questionable jobs by mandating higher wages—like a \$15 minimum wage. Why don’t we figure out how to make money instead of wasting millions on Trump’s personal obsession, “The Wall,” with no proof it will do a bit of good? By the way, what good is it supposed to do?

COMMON SENSE II is published by the Itasca Progressive Caucus in Grand Rapids, Minnesota

Editor: Valerie Conner conray@arvig.net

ITASCA PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

Chair: Jeanne Newstrom itascaprogressive@gmail.com

Visit us at www.itascaprogressive.org

computer generated/volunteer labor

What Could Have Been

By Valerie Conner

There seems to be universal agreement that our immigration system is in dire need of reform. That may be where the agreement stops. Trump in his fear and hate mongering pouts about the threat of invasion over the Mexican border insists that a concrete 2,000 mile wall is the answer to everything. Some employers strive to fill jobs with qualified people they can't find; others exploit the system to undermine the employee rights and pay of citizens. Immigrants—legal and illegal—struggle to work their way through the complicated and often changing bureaucracy.



In order to develop a reform that addresses all of the parties, it helps to have people from various segments of the problem to contribute to an effective solution. We must start from the firm belief that it is necessary that a nation have a fair and effective immigration policy that allows legal immigration, curtails illegal immigration, and in

the process promotes economic progress for all. The Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, or S.744 of 2013 did just that. The bipartisan “Gang of Eight” Senators not only developed a comprehensive bill, but they also were able to get it through the Senate on a 68-32 veto-proof vote. Although there were enough votes in the House to pass it into law, Republican Speaker John Boehner, invoking the hair-brained, unofficial Hastert Rule that says you must have support from a majority from the majority before putting a bill to a vote, refused to bring it to a vote. So it died. So did immigration reform. That’s too bad, because it was a good bill.



What specifically does the bill do?

According to the American Immigration Council (www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org), it included border enforcement, legal immigration reforms, due process protections, employment categories, acknowledgement of undocumented people who have been here for decades as well as their children. Importantly it committed the needed resources to “secure the border, modernize and streamline our current legal immigration system, while creating a tough but fair legalization program for individuals who are currently here.”



The bill had five titles, each addressing a different aspect of immigration. Title I dealt with border security and oversight. Its goals must have been attained before any of the other titles took effect. Instead of “The Wall,” the security program included a doubling of full-time border agents on the Mexican

border, an electronic exit system at ports of entry to monitor those who overstay their visas, building more barriers and adding aircraft and radio surveillance and border patrol stations, and increasing the number of prosecutors, judges, and staff. What system was to be used where was to be determined by the local needs and conditions: no one-sized wall fits all.

Title II dealt with visas and legal status. A Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) designation was to be established. This involved the “dreamers.” A major change was the admittance of legal immigrants on a merit system emphasizing merit (education and skills) and need over family ties. The RPI program provided a path to Legal Permanent Residence (LPR) status and a green card. Seasonal agricultural workers not intending to immigrate were also dealt with. Other non-permanent workers were dealt with in Title IV. The implementation of this provision intended to clear up the enormous backlog of cases.



Title III involved interior enforcement. A large part of this title provided for a mandatory e-verify system which mandated employers check the immigration status of all their employees. Currently only about 7% of U.S. employers utilize the program. There were phase-in periods dependent on the number of employees. People seeking asylum were addressed here as well. Human trafficking and deportation procedures were a part of this title.

Title IV dealt with nonimmigrant visa programs for those who come here to work but do not intend to establish permanent residence. Other than agricultural workers dealt with in Title II, these may be hospitality workers or people who work for an international company assigned here temporarily. This title also dealt with employers wanting to import workers with specific skills. The caveat has always been that unscrupulous employers want foreign workers to pay them less than home-grown employees. Protections against that practice and penalties were included.

Title V provided for a Youth Jobs Fund for low income youth.

In general, this bill which could be resuscitated was comprehensive, well thought out, and balanced the nation’s need for security as well as reasonable immigration. The CBO estimated that our economy would have expanded by billions of dollars under this bill. Had Boehner held the vote in 2013, we would be well on the way to full implementation of these provisions. Instead, the shutdown extracted a heavy human and economic toll, we are not pursuing intelligent reform, and we continue to be distracted by a manufactured “crisis.” Ah, what could have been.



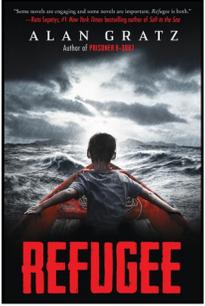


Progressive Caucus Book Hook

Seeking Refuge

By Vicki Andrews

I had been intrigued by reviews of the book *Refugee* by Alan Gratz: “unflinching and sympathetic,” said the *New York Times*, “memorable and tightly plotted,” said *Publishers Weekly*, and “a stunning, poignant novel,” said *Entertainment Weekly*, to mention just a few. I ordered it, not realizing it was intended for young adult readers, which I’m not. It turned out to be one of the most moving, well-written, timely books I’ve read. I recommend it to all: young adults, old adults, and everyone in between. *Refugee* tells the stories of three children: Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud, and their families.



Josef is a young Jewish boy living in Nazi Germany in the 1930s. After the frightening attacks of Kristallnacht, his father is arrested and sent to a concentration camp. He is released after six months on the condition he take his family and leave the country. Following a perilous journey, the family boards a ship to Cuba, which at the time was taking in Jewish refugees. As the boat arrives, the Cuban government reverses its decision to accept them. They attempt to land in the United States and are turned away; they must return to Europe where their search for asylum continues.

Isabel is a Cuban girl in 1994. Riots and unrest are spreading throughout the country, and the family decides to flee to the United States with their neighbors on a small, handmade boat. They push off from Cuba into the ocean toward Miami with the police shooting after them. Along the way the

motor dies; the boat fills with water; sharks attack; they accidentally land in the Bahamas and are forced to leave. As they are nearing their destination, their boat begins to break apart and Isabel’s mother goes into labor.



Mahmoud lives in Aleppo, Syria in 2015. His homeland is torn apart by the violence and destruction. One day a missile strikes and destroys his home, and his family decides they must leave the country. Mahmoud and his family flee Syria by car, by foot, by inflatable raft, crossing through Turkey, Greece, Macedonia, and arriving in Hungary where they are imprisoned. They are eventually released from prison and travel to Austria with other refugees, finally arriving in Germany where they are given asylum.



Refugee gives insight into the lives of people who must flee their countries and search for a new land. It is fascinating to read the accounts of the struggles, trials, and trauma that each family experiences and how hope for a better future keeps them moving. Although Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are separated by continents and decades, shocking connections tie their stories together in the end. The book also features maps of each family’s travels as well as the author’s note that tells the history of each country’s conditions that led to their flights.

It's MEMBERSHIP TIME!!

Send your \$20-\$25 check to:

Itasca Progressive Caucus
DFL Office
809 NE 4th St.
Grand Rapids, MN 55744

CALENDAR OF EVENTS—GET INVOLVED AND GET IT DONE!

Event	Date /Time	Location
DFL Headquarters Open (326-6296)	Tues & Thurs 2-5 pm	DFL Headquarters
Itasca Progressive Caucus (259-4490)	3rd Monday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Central Committee Meets	4th Monday 6:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
DFL Social Club & Lunch	1st Wednesday Noon	DFL Headquarters
DFL Pot Luck (Open to the Public)	3rd Wednesday 5:30 pm	DFL Headquarters
Earth Circle	3rd Saturday 2:00 pm	GR Public Library
Itasca Working families Alliance	2nd Monday 6:30 pm	Dutchroom
Itasca Indivisible	2nd Tuesday 7:00 pm	Dutchroom
GR Human Rights Commission	Last Wednesday 4:00 pm	GR City Hall
GR Heaktgcare for All	1st Thursday 5:00-6:00 m	DFL Headquarters
Circles of Support	Every Thursday 6:30 pm	811 NE 4th St.
Deadline for <i>Common Sense II</i>	March 8, 2019	conray@arvig.net