

Combating Anti-Immigrant Opportunism Post September 11

INTRODUCTION

In the months since the September 11 attacks, anti-immigrant groups have stepped up their efforts to restrict immigration to the U.S. These organizations appear to have responded to the September 11 attacks as a new opportunity to deliver an anti-immigrant message, in the hope of shaping public policy. Their often extreme tactics and message are nothing new, but the national sentiment following September 11 makes this a uniquely critical time to respond to these claims and debunk attempts to link terrorism to immigration.

This paper first examines anti-immigrant sentiment in the U.S. prior to September 11. Then it analyzes the history and central characters of the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) and other groups within the restrictionist movement. This is followed by an examination of the way that FAIR and its allies have taken advantage of the September 11 attack to expand their support and promote their anti-immigration message, including advertising campaigns, Washington lobbying, and a Congressional coalition now pushing for a radical, restrictionist agenda.

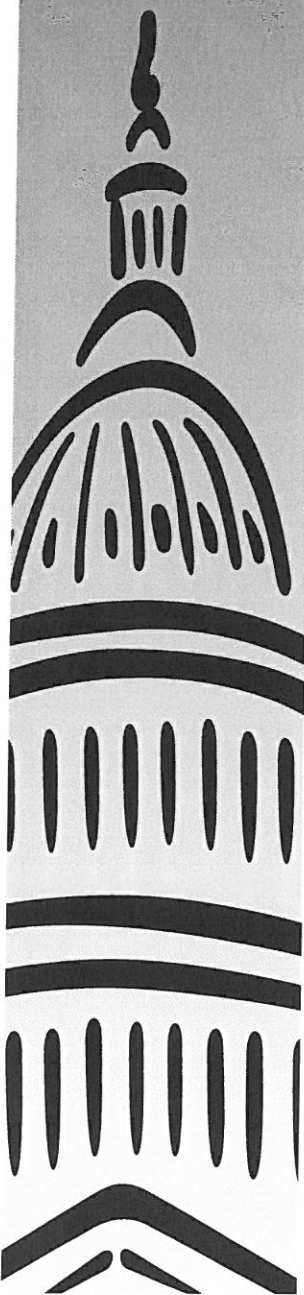
ANTI-IMMIGRANT ACTIVITY PRIOR TO SEPTEMBER 11

Anti-immigrant sentiment and nativism in the U.S. is nearly as old as immigration, and each new wave of immigrants to the U.S. has sparked a reactionary nativist movement, which promotes fears that the newcomers are un-American and cannot be integrated into the mainstream of American life. Even Benjamin Franklin was notoriously concerned with a wave of German immigration in the revolutionary period. Franklin proclaimed that “those [Germans] who come hither are generally the most ignorant Stupid Sort of their own Nation...and as few of the English understand the German language, and so cannot address them either from the Press or Pulpit, 'tis almost impossible to remove any prejudices they once entertain.”¹ Similar reactionary movements have opposed every new group of immigrants since then, including the French, Italians, Japanese, Chinese, Irish, and Jewish. All of these groups successfully assimilated into the American mainstream, and all of the best evidence suggests that current immigrants have done so as well.²

At times the U.S. has offered, in Tom Paine’s words, “an asylum for the persecuted lovers of civil and religious liberty” from all parts of the world. At other times Americans have done the persecuting – passing discriminatory laws against the foreign-born, denying their fundamental rights, and assaulting them with mob violence, even lynchings. The Alien and Sedition Acts of 1798, the Chinese Exclusion Acts of the late 19th Century, the Americanization Campaign of the early 1900s, the English Only Movement, and more recent anti-immigrant campaigns have all targeted particular groups of immigrants and have blamed them for all of the country’s ills.

The U.S. has welcomed immigrants in periods of expansion and optimism, and reviled them in times of stagnation and cynicism. Attitudes toward immigrants have depended primarily on domestic politics and economics and less on the volume and characteristics of the newcomers. In short, American nativism has had less to do with “them” than us.

Fear and loathing of foreigners reach such levels when the nation’s problems become so intractable that some people seek scapegoats. Typically, these periods feature a political or



economic crisis, combined with a loss of faith in American institutions and a sense that the national community is gravely fractured. Hence a yearning for social homogeneity that needs an internal enemy to sustain itself: the “alien.”

The 2000 Census confirmed America’s unprecedented diversity. After years of sustained economic growth, many Americans feel comfortable with this diversity, but some, reacting to immigrants who have by-passed traditional gateway cities to settle in traditionally White rural and suburban communities, are uncomfortable with the changing demographics. Anti-immigrant groups have capitalized on this discomfort with negative advertising and grassroots organizing campaigns in newly-emerging immigrant communities. These organizations have falsely attempted to blame immigrants for everything from suburban sprawl to environmental degradation, and most recently have taken advantage of the fears of the American public to blame immigrants for terrorism.

THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT ORGANIZATIONS

FEDERATION FOR AMERICAN IMMIGRATION REFORM (FAIR)

The most visible anti-immigration organization in the United States nationally is the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). FAIR was founded by John Tanton, a Michigan ophthalmologist, in 1979. Tanton, an anti population activist and former president of Zero Population Growth, has been active in a vast number of anti-immigrant groups, including U.S. English, an organization that he founded to promote the establishment of English as the official language of the U.S. Tanton’s views have drawn accusations of racial bias:

- A staff member at Zero Population Growth told the Los Angeles Times that they turned down Tanton’s immigration proposals because “they were uneasy about getting into ethnicity – they didn’t want to be called racist.” Tanton and his allies “talk in very legitimate terms, about protecting our borders and saving the nation’s resources and so on,” the former staffer said, “but the trouble is, after you’ve heard them, you want to go home and take a shower.”⁷³
- In 1988, an internal memo that Tanton had written for a conference of the leadership of FAIR, U.S. English, and related organizations, called “Witan IV” was leaked to the public. It explained his objectives in explicitly racist terms: “Will the present majority peaceably hand over its political power to a group that is simply more fertile?...Can homo contraceptivus compete with homo progenitiva if borders aren’t controlled?.....Perhaps this is the first instance in which those with their pants up are going to get caught by those with their pants down!....As whites see their power and control over their lives declining, will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?”⁷⁴
- Tanton has called the novel, *The Camp of the Saints*, “prescient.”⁷⁵ His publishing company, Social Contract Press, publishes an English translation of the book, which encourages Whites facing ethnically diverse immigrants to “repulse the invasion and destroy the invader. Assuming, that is, that we are willing to murder – with or without regret – a million helpless wretches.”⁷⁶
- In 1997, Tanton predicted America would be overrun with immigrants “defecating and creating garbage and looking for jobs.”⁷⁷

FAIR has made no attempts to distance itself from any of the racist statements made by its founder; it has defended him and kept him on its board of directors.

Tanton’s significance goes well beyond FAIR – the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette reported:

In the past eight years, Tanton has created a network of about a dozen organizations to tackle issues related to population control. That control, he says, means curtailing legal and illegal immigration.

Pittsburgh's Cordelia S. May...has been the angel of the network...May has given at least \$3.5 million since 1980 to the Federation for American Immigration Reform, U.S. English, the Center for Immigration Studies...Population and Environment Balance, the Immigration Reform Law Institute...⁸

Tanton's comments are consistent with comments made by Daniel Stein, executive director of FAIR:

- Stein told a Wall Street Journal interviewer, "Certainly we would encourage people in other countries to have small families. Otherwise they'll all be coming here, because there's no room at the Vatican."⁹
- He was also quoted as saying that, "immigrants don't come all church-loving, freedom-loving, God-fearing. Some of them firmly believe in socialist or redistributionist ideas. Many of them hate America, hate everything the United States stands for. Talk to some of these Central Americans."¹⁰
- Defending the argument that African food aid is counterproductive, Stein said: "Should we be subsidizing people with low IQs to have as many children as possible, and not subsidizing those with high ones?"¹¹

Another factor that suggests unsavory motivations of FAIR and its affiliated organizations is their sources of funding. One of FAIR's major backers for many years was the Pioneer Fund, a New York organization that has advanced eugenics research for over 60 years. In their own words the purpose of the Pioneer Fund is:

To conduct or aid in conducting study and research into the problems of heredity and eugenics in the human race generally and such study and such research in respect to animals and plants as may throw light upon heredity in man, and research and study into the problems of human race betterment with special reference to the people of the United States.

Building upon Arthur Jenson's Pioneer Fund-driven research into White intellectual superiority, the Fund has sought to advance research, policy development, and political actions with the goal of restricting the fertility of non-Whites and increasing the fertility of Whites. There is a broad consensus that the Pioneer Fund pursues highly questionable policies:

- "Ever since 1937, the Pioneer Fund has promoted the study of racial purity as an ideal....Psychologist Arthur Jenson received \$1.1 million from the Pioneer Fund. Twenty-five years ago, he started writing that blacks may be genetically less intelligent than whites. Psychologist Philippe Rushton received \$656,000. He says his researchers show small genitalia may be a sign of superior intelligence. Psychologist Richard Lynn, \$325,000 from the fund. He has written that incompetent cultures should be phased out."¹²
- "As the horror of the Nazi death camps became known, the science of Eugenics was discredited. Nevertheless. . .the Pioneer Fund continued to pay for research in race betterment. One recent Pioneer-funded study, for example, examined the I.Q. of non-white immigrants. The fund also funnels money to anti-immigration organizations."¹³
- "The Pioneer Fund was set up in 1937 to encourage research into race and eugenics, which is the study of means of improving the quality of race, especially by selective breeding. The Pioneer Fund's specific concern was the improvement of white people, although the word 'white' has since been removed from its charter [in 1985]...The fund was incorporated by two American scientists named Harry Laughlin and Frederick Osborn. Laughlin received an honorary doctorate from Heidelberg

University in 1936 in honor of his contribution to Nazi eugenics, and Osborn once described the Nazi sterilization law as a ‘most exciting experiment.’”¹⁴

Garret Hardin, director emeritus of FAIR, has also expressed extremist views:

Every time a philanthropist sets up a foundation to look for a cure for a certain disease he thereby threatens humanity eugenically ... Again consider the matter of charity. When one saves a starving man, one may thereby help him breed more children.¹⁵

FAIR’s current anti-immigrant agenda reflects the extremist rhetoric of its founder, executive director, and sources of funding. FAIR is pushing radically restrictionist policies including a “temporary” ban on all immigration except for the spouses and minor children of U.S. citizens.¹⁶ While their official documents recommend a five-year ban on immigrant admissions, in 1999 executive director Daniel Stein, as a guest on a political talk show, stated his preference for “a 50-year breather to absorb and assimilate the waves that have come.”¹⁷

Unfortunately, however, the media often feature representatives of FAIR without counterpoint, because they are widely misperceived as a neutral, balanced source for information on the immigration issue. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting commented:

When covering an issue as racially charged as immigration, journalists have an obligation to inform their audience if they are quoting a source that receives major funding from an explicitly racist source. This is particularly true in the case of the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which has frequently provided the only non-governmental viewpoint on immigration policy in news reports.¹⁸

In addition to FAIR, there is a broad array of anti-immigrant and restrictionist organizations that range from explicitly White supremacist organizations like David Duke’s National Organization For European American Rights (NOFEAR), to more relevant restrictionist groups; they tend largely to overlap in both funding and membership. This section will briefly analyze several of the other important anti-immigration groups, including: Americans for Immigration Control, the Center for Immigration Studies, NumbersUSA, ProjectUSA, and Voices of Citizens Together. These groups and others often act together under umbrella organizations, including the Coalition for the Future of the American Worker and United to Secure America (discussed in a later section). There are also prominent individuals such as former presidential candidate Pat Buchanan and former Governor of California Pete Wilson who have used anti-immigrant messages to further their political careers, with little success.

AMERICANS FOR IMMIGRATION CONTROL FOUNDATION

Americans for Immigration Control was founded in 1983 and now claims a membership of 250,000 people, although that number is unsubstantiated. The foundation is its political arm. The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) has designated the Americans for Immigration Control Foundation as a hate group.¹⁹ The SPLC based this designation on their research indicating that the Americans for Immigration Control Foundation received funding from the Pioneer Fund, sells anti-immigrant literature, and funded, along with FAIR and NumbersUSA, a million-dollar anti-immigration billboard campaign. The Americans for Immigration Control Foundation’s web page contains several anti-immigration comments with racial overtones:

- “Currently, fewer than 15% of our immigrants come from Europe and share the heritage that made America strong. A majority of today’s immigrants are (consciously or unconsciously) undermining our customs, our culture, our language, and our institutions.”²⁰

- “Because America’s culture, customs, language, and laws are under assault from foreigners who come to live here and, instead of learning the American way of life, choose to impose their own alien cultures, languages, and institutions upon us, we must review our heritage and understand the need to preserve it, lest America self-destruct through ethnic strife.”²¹
- “If we don’t take action now, the surging flood of legal and illegal immigrants from Mexico and Central America will soon form a majority in California and the Southwest. Some of these Latino militants are already organizing to form those states into a new nation called AZTLAN.”²²

AICF’s executive director, John Vinson, is also the founder of a White supremacist organization called League of the South.²³ In the anti-immigration publication *Border Watch*, which he edits, Vinson recently defended his immigration position on the basis of cultural warfare:

Human beings, by their nature, desire a sense of belonging, and belonging requires common values... Though diversity may be enjoyable for a vacation, the work-a-day world works best when common ties keep social friction to a minimum. Agreed upon standards and values, derived from Western culture, have been the source of American success and freedom... Sadly this harmony is fading, as community after community falls victim to the kind of diversity which destroys common purpose.

THE CENTER FOR IMMIGRATION STUDIES (CIS)

CIS is the most scholarly of the anti-immigration organizations. Originally founded as the public policy wing of FAIR, CIS produces academic research that consistently supports the notion that immigration is bad for the U.S. Given the close affiliation of CIS to FAIR and other restrictionist groups, their work is clearly focused on providing an analytical basis for immigration restriction.

NUMBERSUSA

NumbersUSA is directed by Roy Beck, a prolific writer on environmental issues closely connected to John Tanton. They helped finance a recent anti-immigrant billboard campaign with FAIR and AICF.²⁴ Their web page prominently features a chart that differentiates between “Americans,” defined as people who were here in 1970, and “immigrants,” who have arrived since. It predicts those “Americans” will be overrun in the next 50 years.²⁵ While Beck publicly denounced immigrant bashing,²⁶ as editor of *The Social Contract* under Tanton, Beck has published articles by white nationalists, including Samuel Francis and James Lubinskas.²⁷

PROJECTUSA

ProjectUSA was founded in 1987 by Craig Nelson in Queens, NY. Nelson typically claims that his group is motivated only by reasoned, economic arguments; however, the organization’s website warns:

Yet, even a cursory glance around can not fail to impress upon the observer that, as our country becomes more diverse, it is also becoming more politically balkanized. ‘Identity politics’ is increasing – not decreasing. Why do we continue to pursue a policy that can only intensify this tendency to balkanization?²⁸

ProjectUSA is running a large number of billboards across the country with the slogan “Immigration is doubling U.S. population in my lifetime. (Please don’t do this to us Congress.)” According to their website, they are currently running about 100 billboards in 12 states.²⁹ Although it no longer appears to be up on the Web, the Southern Poverty Law Center noted that

ProjectUSA had these comments accompanying a picture of their billboard that featured a White child: “Stop immigration! Why anti-racism is turning us into cockroaches. The ‘white kid’ billboard was the one that really roasted their ass.”³⁰

VOICES OF CITIZENS TOGETHER

Glenn Spencer, a hard-line restrictionist, founded the organization also known as American Patrol in 1992. VCT is condemned as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.³¹ The SPLC bases this conclusion on such racist comments from Spencer as: “The Mexican culture is based on deceit. Chicanos and Mexicanos lie as a means of survival,” written in a letter to the Los Angeles Times. His website frequently includes contributions from White supremacists, racists, and anti-Semites, who are also featured on his radio program. Spencer’s videotape, sold through VCT, paints a picture of America being invaded by Mexico, blaming the problems of drugs, crime, poverty, and “immigration via the birth canal” on Mexicans, who are denounced as a “cultural cancer.”³²

PAT BUCHANAN

In some ways Pat Buchanan can be considered the most prominent figure among immigration restrictionists. Buchanan has run for president twice and has a sizeable following. Buchanan’s politics are based on extreme nationalism, including an opposition to trade and immigration. His latest book, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*, published within months of September 11, portrays immigrants as an invasion force and cultural threat with which traditional White America is at war. Among the arguments in the book:

- “Uncontrolled immigration threatens to deconstruct the nation we grew up in and convert America into a conglomeration of peoples with almost nothing in common – not history, heroes, language, culture, faith, or ancestors. Balkanization beckons.”³³
- In a chapter called “La Reconquista,” Buchanan warns of a Mexican invasion of the Southwest: “Mexicans not only come from a different culture, but millions are of another race. History and experience teach us that different races are far more difficult to assimilate... millions from Africa and Asia are still not full participants in American society.”³⁴
- “With Mexico’s population growing by ten million every decade, there will be no end to the long march north before the American Southwest is fully Hispanicized.”³⁵
- “America and the West face four clear and present dangers... Second is the mass immigration of peoples of different colors, creeds, and cultures, changing the character of the West forever.”³⁶
- “Legal immigration should be rolled back to 250,000 each year. Welfare benefits should be restricted to Americans... In short, immigration laws should be rewritten, with the emphasis on what is best for America.”³⁷
- “The horrific atrocities at the World Trade Center and Pentagon, the other acts of terrorism that have occurred, should be wake-up calls to this generation of what is at risk in our naïve embrace of ‘open borders.’”³⁸

RESTRICTIONIST ACTIVITY SINCE SEPTEMBER 11

In the wake of the terrorist attacks, the nativist movement appears to be dedicating significant resources to renewing its credibility and broadening its audience. The restrictionist groups are buttressing their policy campaign with an extensive media and lobbying effort. The organization

used as an umbrella for these activities is called United to Secure America (USA), which consists of FAIR, AIC, NumbersUSA, and other groups. USA has launched an unofficial campaign that includes two components – a media campaign targeted at the public and a lobbying effort focused on Washington, but also active in state legislatures.

It is notable that the agenda which FAIR and other groups have proposed as a remedy to the new threat of terrorism is identical to the agenda they had been pursuing for decades. Most notably, they have renewed their calls for a moratorium on all immigration and have generally blamed immigrants for the terrorist attacks.

USA has produced a series of incendiary, anti-immigrant advertisements that link legal immigration with terrorism, and the September 11 attacks in particular, despite the fact that not one of the 19 terrorists was an immigrant to the U.S. The ads include photos of the 19 terrorists and the line: “Recently, foreign nationals inflicted the worst harm on America ever. We now must reduce immigration to stop terrorism.”³⁹

This sort of ad campaign is not new to FAIR, who last year spent over \$1 million in a campaign against pro-immigrant Senator Spencer Abraham (R-Michigan) by running advertisements comparing Abraham, at the time the only Arab American in the Congress, with Osama bin Laden, and representing his support for legal immigration as a desire to let terrorists into the country.⁴⁰

Currently, the USA ads have been running in Iowa, Missouri, and South Dakota, states expected to have competitive Senate races this year with the apparent goal of setting up immigration as a battleground issue in the 2004 presidential elections.⁴¹

The second prong of FAIR’s newest campaign under the United for a Secure America banner is a lobbying effort inside the Beltway. They have hired a bipartisan array of lobbyists, including Podesta/Mattoon, Butera & Andrews, Global USA, the Livingston-Solomon Group, and Hall, Green, Rupli.⁴² The number of firms suggests a monthly lobbying budget of at least \$100,000.

Bill Crosby, vice president and chief operating officer of the Solomon Group, stated that “the goal of the coalition over the long term is to reduce immigration levels back to where they were a few years ago.”⁴³

While the coalition currently includes FAIR, its various affiliated organizations, and other extremist anti-immigration groups, lobbyist Wright Andrews has announced intentions to expand the coalitions to include airlines, which have an interest in appearing to be doing something about terrorism, and biometrics companies, which would reap significant financial benefits if new identification requirements were passed into law.⁴⁴

CONCLUSIONS

While organizations like FAIR have been advocating draconian restrictions on immigration for the last quarter of a century, their use of incendiary tactics is increasingly troubling in the wake of September 11. At a moment when the national leadership, starting with President Bush, is calling for Americans to unite, FAIR’s sustained attempts to foment resentment of immigrants appears particularly divisive.

A recent *Washington Times* columnist wrote:

Unfortunately, in uneasy times justice, mercy, and common sense all tend to evaporate. Ambitious demagogues don’t help. For their own reasons, they blur the line between the terrorist and the

illegal alien, even between legal and illegal immigration. They have long wanted to seal this country's borders, and they're using what happened September 11 as an argument not against terror, but against immigration.⁴⁵

During these challenging times it is particularly critical that immigration reforms be thoughtfully crafted and effective. A debate driven by fear and xenophobia is dangerous and will not produce effective policies that truly address our policy goals. In fact, the policies suggested by the restrictionist groups only serve to divide the nation during a time when effectiveness and national unity are most critical.

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