

ICH BIN EIN ARIZONIAN

Written by Harvey M. Sapolsky

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HARVEY M. SAPOLSKY, MAY 28 2010

The state of Arizona recently enacted a statute which allows police officers to inquire about the immigration status of individuals they stop for other infractions of the law such as speeding or failure to yield for a pedestrian. Although requesting documentation about residency and citizenship may seem like a routine law enforcement practice in many parts of the world, the Arizona law is causing much controversy in the United States, including caustic comments from President Obama and his Attorney General, where the presence of millions of illegal immigrants is widely tolerated. My own state of Massachusetts has declared itself a sanctuary for illegals, not allowing local police officers to report immigration violators they encounter to federal authorities. President Obama's aunt was discovered to have been living for years in Boston provided public housing and receiving medical and financial assistance from the state, including a hip replacement, while ignoring a federal deportation order. Miraculously, she was recently granted political refugee status from tribal violence in Kenya by federal officials on her second appeal, this one post the election of her nephew.

Ich bin ein Arizonian. Yes, America is a nation built on immigration, made strong by the renewal in energy and ideas that immigration allows. My own parents were immigrants. But there is a difference between monitored legal immigration and uncontrolled illegal immigration. America should be and is open to continued immigration. There are, however, significant security and political risks with persist, uncontrolled immigration that we have experienced in recent years.

Many of the 9/11 terrorists were in the country on expired visas or had committed other immigration violations. Porous borders and lax immigration law enforcement have allowed terrorists to be a continuing presence. The fear of being accused of racial profiling in a country sensitive to its history of racial discrimination makes it nearly impossible to discuss publically the need for tighter, focused controls. Instead, legal entry for all to America has acquired a nasty edge, and the path of citizenship for those who follow the rules has become a demanding and thoroughly unpleasant bureaucratic gauntlet.

The obvious fact is that most illegal immigrants in the United States are Hispanics slipping easily into the country from Mexico. Hispanics, if legally here, are eligible for Affirmative Action (racially profiled) benefits thus creating special pressure for amnesties though I can't recall the period when America enslaved Hispanics. Moreover their language is becoming increasingly close to being designated an official second language, opening America to the same political divisiveness that plagues countries like Belgium and Canada.

America's Blacks are the main victims of illegal immigration. They remain disproportionately the holders of the lowest paid jobs, the jobs likely taken by illegal immigrants, and disproportionately in need of public assistance, including that offered by Affirmative Action programs. Denied to them are the increased wages and better education that would come about if the competition for low wage jobs were restricted by better border control. It almost seems as if the major political parties in America have given up on our own poor and conspired together to open the borders to import a second poor class.

Mexico and at least some of the other countries from which America's new poor are drawn are also victims, losing many of their most ambitious people to the migration. America's failure to control the flow of immigrants provides the safety valve for the pressures to reform the corrupt and undemocratic governments that prevail in Mexico and so

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many other parts of Latin America. Illegal immigration has serious costs in every direction. The sooner it is stopped the more progress for the poor there will be everywhere.

About the author:

Harvey M. Sapolsky is Professor of Public Policy and Organization, Emeritus, at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and former Director of the MIT Security Studies Program. He has been a visiting professor at the University of Michigan and the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. In the defense field he has served as a consultant or panel member for a number of government commissions and study groups. His most recent books are *US Defense Politics* written with Eugene Gholz and Caitlin Talmadge and *US Military Innovation Since the Cold War* edited with Benjamin Friedman and Brendan Green, both published by Routledge.