

# In Defense of Immigration from “Shi\*thole Countries”

“Why are we having all these people from shi\*hole countries come here?” US president Donald Trump allegedly asked during an Oval Office meeting, further musing that the US should try to strike a new balance with fewer immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean and more from, say, Norway.

Well, of course, he shouldn't have put it THAT way, if he did (he denies it). Between the language and the demographics in his supposed example, he's handed his opponents the opportunity for a doubly delicious round of public moral preening — look how vulgar, and how racist, Donald Trump is!

Maybe they're right. But they're missing much bigger points. Whatever his phraseology, and regardless of any racial differences between the populations of the countries he chooses as examples, he got the whole matter backward in two important ways.

First and foremost, neither Donald Trump nor Congress should be choosing who comes to America. That's the market's job, not the government's job, and certainly not the federal government's job. Prospective employers and prospective employees don't need politicians to tell them whether or not they can get together. They can figure that out for themselves. If it's government largess that's the problem, well, end the welfare state already instead of complaining endlessly about who uses it (besides which, immigrants pay more per capita in taxes and consume less per capita in welfare benefits than native-born Americans ).

Secondly, as sociologist and essayist Jacques Delacroix points out, the incentives for immigration run in the opposite direction from that Trump's comment assumes:

Immigrants from wealthy states like Norway (which has a higher per capita GDP and a more robust welfare state than the US) are more likely to be from the bottom of the barrel — the people who can't or won't make out well for themselves in an economy even better than ours, but have enough money to get on a plane and take their laziness and complaining elsewhere.

Immigrants from poor states like Haiti, Somalia, and — Delacroix's example — India are more likely to be the cream of the crop, those ambitious enough to leave everything they know behind and start over in search of success, in some cases, even risking starvation in the desert or shark-infested waters on inner tubes for a minimum wage opportunity.

Again: The market's got this, if the politicians will just butt out and knock off their disgusting, anti-American, authoritarian control freakery.