

# Heartless Immigration Restrictions Need Replacing

Some elements of the right-wing are spreading the fear that Democrats are engineering a take-over of America by replacing white voters with nonwhites through liberal immigration policies. It's come to be known as "the great replacement," and in its ugliest form, it is said to be a Jewish conspiracy. Remember the sickening chant at the 2017 right-wing Charlottesville rally: "Jews will not replace us"?

I wish this fear-mongering could be ignored, but since a few fanatics have committed violence apparently to prevent the "great replacement," it needs to be discussed.

Why would anyone lose even one wink over this alleged plot? For one thing, even if such a plan existed, the Democrats can't possibly know how future citizens will vote or even *if* they will vote. Why assume they will follow the Democrats' orders, as the right-wingers expect? In recent years, some Republicans have done fairly well with Latino voters. As long as conservatives talk about the nonwhite population as though it were a group of obedient children rather than moral agents, they needn't wonder why they don't win more votes in those communities. Just a thought, but maybe people who are energetic and entrepreneurial enough to leave their impoverished homes for a shot at greater opportunity, despite the risks, ought to be wooed, not alienated by political activists who pay lip service to individual enterprise.

Regardless of whether some Democratic politicians and left-wing activists think they can carry out the alleged plot or whether their statements praising America's changing ethnic composition are merely quoted out of context, *who cares?* True freedom-lovers favor whatever ethnic composition results from the freely chosen actions of sovereign individuals — both current and aspiring Americans. Freedom's champions also favor progressively shrinking government power so that no one — regardless of ethnicity — can impose his or her values on others. (Strictly speaking, one value should be imposed on others, the liberal value summed up by the phrase *live and let live*. In other words, aggressive physical force is illegitimate.)

It would be nice if someone prominent in American politics would say to the conspiracy theorists: "Who needs replacement conspiracy to explain the need for open borders? We already have a perfectly good reason to open the gates: immigrants not only help themselves by coming here, but they also improve our society and the whole world."

But don't hold your breath. Does a Democrat walk the land who favors unrestricted immigration? Please let me know.

On the contrary, some Democrats have their own replacement conspiracy theory about

those who favor free (or at least freer) immigration. Sen. Bernie Sanders, the economically illiterate darling of the left, says he opposes open borders because “the Koch brothers,” by which he means anyone who favors freedom of movement (that is, libertarians), want cheap labor to *replace* more expensive American labor. It never occurs to politicians like Sanders that open-borders advocates might just favor individual liberty. Isn’t it interesting how much the right and left have in common?

Tucker Carlson leads the right-wing media in “exposing” the great plot to create a new electorate through immigration. His trope is revealing: “Look, if this was happening in your house, your parents adopted a bunch of new siblings and gave them brand-new bikes, you would say to your siblings, ‘You know, I think we’re being replaced by kids our parents love more.’”

It doesn’t get more ridiculous than that. First of all, *would* you say that? Second, in what respect do new arrivals get better “bikes” than those who were born here? Third, why does the government give anyone “bikes”?

The most revealing bit is Carlson’s analogizing the country to a family with the government as parents. It seems that the godfather of American conservatism isn’t Edmund Burke, but Sir Robert Filmer. (John Locke’s liberalism was a response to the monarchist Filmer.) According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*,

Filmer believed that the state was a family, that the first king was a father, and that submission to patriarchal authority was the key to political obligation. Making a strained interpretation of scripture, typical of his time but ridiculed by Locke, he pronounced that Adam was the first king and that Charles I ruled in England as Adam’s eldest heir. Filmer represented that patriarchal social structure which characterized Europe until the Industrial Revolution.

So let’s get serious. Drawing on contemporary data, history, and sound social theory, George Mason University Professor Bryan Caplan shows that every one of the common fears about free immigration — lower wages, a bigger welfare state, radical cultural change, authoritarianism, etc. — are either concocted wholesale or outrageously exaggerated. So stop worrying! (See this interview with Caplan and check out his graphic nonfiction book, *Open Borders: The Science and Ethics of Immigration*.)

By the way, enacting immigration controls in the name of staving off authoritarianism is a cruel joke because controls on immigration necessarily are controls on whomever the state chooses to define as a citizen.

Instead of favoring heartless restrictions on people’s freedom to move, why don’t people who worry about immigration instead call for limits on government power so that fewer areas of life are controlled by politicians beholden to blocs of voters? Conservatives must

have their own sort of welfare state in mind.