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Immigration Policy & Border Control

Immigration policy and border control are crucial issues among modern nations and, in recent years, have become even more prominent in U.S. political debate. An agreed upon reform, or even direction for such reform, has not been found as major policy decisions constantly shift between more open borders and lenient immigration requirements to closed and restrictive ones. Such policy on the exclusionary end of this spectrum is what we are witnessing today. Since Donald Trump took office he has signed several executive orders on border security, interior enforcement, and refugees, and repealed two programs created by President Obama to shield undocumented children and their parents from deportation. All of this has worked to restrict entry into the United States, but at what cost and by what right?

In attempting to better itself and its people the U.S. seems to have disregarded the suffering it causes for the excluded. Those who immigrate, either legally or illegally, to the United States are often in search of opportunity. They seek to better their current lives, and it is reasonable to think that such improvement can be found in the U.S. given its democratic culture and higher average GDP per capita as compared to other countries. Some may argue that the U.S. is not required to provide this opportunity, and that other reasonable alternatives exist. But, this does not change the fact that it does provide such opportunity and that it has no legitimate right to deny it from others. Furthermore, for many of these individuals moving beyond nearby countries is not possible due to distance and the associated costs, nor is it always an option if other, similar countries also tightly regulate their immigration and border control.

If a moral individual is expected, at the very least, to not impede upon others' attempts at their own welfare, then there is no clear reason why this expectation should change when looking at a collective body. The U.S. goes even further than this with its constant involvement in the affairs of other countries that are, at least partly, grounded in claims of aiding those countries and their peoples. So then, why does this concern not extend to immigration policy where currently, not only is the welfare of others not considered, but it is also actively denied? Why is Trump attempting to remove a broader range of unauthorized immigrants and enforce stricter limits on entry for possible, legitimate immigrants? The most common justifications for this stem from concerns of security and economy, that is, that by restricting entry of specific individuals we are protecting our own people and financial stability. Yet this is not always true, and it doesn't seem to outweigh the suffering caused.

In the case of security, it is not clear that placing restrictions on those who enter a country actually serves to protect that country any more than the already established internal means of defense do. The imposing of a travel ban on nationals from Iran, Iraq, etc. is an attempt to keep terrorists out. But, not only do there exist options for entering the country despite not being allowed (given that illegal immigration is still prevalent), this kind of justification assumes all to be guilty and punishes them as if they were. Similarly in the case of economy, the worry is that the inclusion of certain individuals can be particularly bad for the financial stability of a society, coming to effect jobs, wages, etc. negatively. Yet the only clear economic harm caused comes solely from illegal immigrants due to their existing beyond the legal regulations of the country's economy. Therefore, legalizing these individuals would serve to solve this problem, and do so in a more humane way than expulsion would, by properly incorporating them into the economy.

Yet despite all this, some people will say “So what?” and cling to the idea that they have a right to exclude whomever they choose from their country and political system. While it is true that political societies may set their own standards for membership, and therefore deny certain people participation in their politics, there is no obvious reason as to why they should have the right to claim land for themselves, a right that is in addition to every individual members’ right to claim land, and then prohibit others from that claimed land on such an arbitrary basis as the place of one’s birth. Perhaps then the best solution is to remove the territorial claims that political societies have entirely. This may seem radical, but it is necessary in order to create a truly justified system of international movement. Future reform should therefore head towards more open borders and lenient immigration requirements rather than focus on unjust and arbitrary exclusion as Trump’s current policies do.

Anna Stutz

The Immorality of the Virtuous Mob

“It shouldn’t be legal to be that ugly, definitely an inbred.”

This was one of the countless invectives hurled at the 11-year-old Keaton Jones in the wake of his ascension to Internet notoriety. The boy’s tearful account of being bullied had at first elicited an outpouring of support before images surfaced showing the racist sympathies of his parents. In an Internet minute, the narrative shifted dramatically, and Keaton, powerless though he was over his association with his parents, had fallen prey to a ruthless online community. Earlier that same year, the mob was even wilder. Attacks on author Charles A. Murray, known for his objectionable viewpoints on race and socioeconomic status, was subjected to an actual pummeling, not only a verbal one. These events beg an important question: Does being on the right side of an ethical issue give one license to engage in depraved and immoral behavior? In other words, at what point in our society did virtue become a legitimate justification for verbal and physical violence and a substitute for debate and argumentation?

At the hands of the mob, Keaton’s pain, age, and innocence no longer mattered – he needed to be beaten into the ground. Callous attacks on a child floated breezily through cyberspace, the perpetrators masking their cruelty under a cloak of virtue. Looking at them in the cold light of a non-virtual day and stripped of their “digilante” trimmings, however, the attacks on Keaton Jones were nothing but the gutting of a child for circumstances beyond his control. The barrage of abuse hurled at Keaton on platforms such as Twitter, ranging from petty insults to threats of physical violence, accomplished nothing. They did not change anyone’s mind - the mobbing was pointless. What could have been legitimate rage over injustice and racism become nothing but a hysterical free-for-all. The Internet made a scapegoat of Keaton himself, responsible not only for the prejudice of his parents, but for the racism of America as a whole. However, in reality, Keaton was a middle schooler who was not responsible for any of it.

What happens when someone that you’re fighting against arguably *is* racist? Does that change anything? I would argue that it doesn’t. In March of 2017, Charles A. Murray, author of “The Bell Curve” and other very controversial works, was physically prevented from speaking by a group of violent

protesters at Middlebury College who also gave his faculty interviewer a concussion during the *melée*. A very strong argument can be made that many of the ideas underlying his most famous works are racist. And some say that this in itself is an “incitement to violence” that must be answered in kind. As appealing as this argument is on a visceral, emotional level, it is intellectually bankrupt. If someone makes a racist argument citing facts and statistics, and you respond by knocking their teeth out, all you have accomplished is the knocking out of teeth. The argument that provoked the attack remains unchallenged, unchanged, and the final word on the topic. To truly challenge Murray would be to challenge him on the battlefield he himself is occupying, an intellectual one. An effective challenge is one that would be able to take down the argument itself, and prove its opposite.

Keaton Jones’s parents believe that whites are the superior race. Charles Murray’s books have been used by some who wish to argue that certain races are intellectually superior to others. And yet, as infuriating as these beliefs are, neither the digital nor physical violence meted out in response did anything to change anyone’s mind or advance the opposite view. The instant and short-lived gratification derived from “getting the bad guy” is not a substitute for reasoning and can be a dangerous cop-out. As difficult as it is for people to swallow, we live in a society in which people are allowed to express their ideas in a nonviolent fashion. If we are to pretend that abhorrent beliefs take on a characteristic of “violence” that can be met with counter violence, we are going down a very dark path, both intellectually and socially. Not only that, but in so doing we construct for ourselves a fantasy world in which we believe that merely by being hysterical or violent, we are righting wrongs. If we allow ourselves to fall into a situation in which we are no longer able to meet argument with argument, logic with logic, and fact with fact, we have become a mob and no longer a civil society.