



## The Forgotten "A" Word: Assimilation

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Amnesty is dead. Now, let's talk about the other "A" word. It's the word and the concept completely abandoned during the immigration debate: assimilation.

Over the last year, hundreds of thousands of illegal alien demonstrators took to the streets lobbying for amnesty. Marchers waved "Amnestia Ahora!" placards in one hand, the flags of their native countries in the other. Open-borders strategists quickly replaced the foreign flags with Old Glory after militant activists caused a public backlash last year. National newspapers played dutiful propagandists and splashed patriotic photo-ops of the "undocumented" masses wrapped in red, white and blue to drum up sympathy.

But now that they've lost their amnesty fight, will they still embrace American symbols and traditions?

Or was it all for show? And what of all that talk of illegal aliens being willing to study citizenship and civics? And take English classes? Why must they be bribed with the promise of a temporary guest worker visa and mass governmental pardon in order to adapt to our way of life? When did assimilation become the means and not an end in itself?

The inflection point can perhaps be traced to the moment when politicians were permitted to invoke the "America is a nation of immigrants" platitude as a mindless justification for open borders.

The fact is: We are not a "nation of immigrants." This is both a factual error and a warm-and-fuzzy non sequitur. Eighty-five percent of the residents currently in the United States were born here. Sure, we are almost all descendants of immi-

grants. But we are not a "nation of immigrants."

(Isn't it funny, by the way, how the politically correct multiculturalists who claim we are a "nation of immigrants" are so insensitive toward Native American Indians, Native Alaskans, Native Hawaiians and descendants of black slaves who did not "immigrate" here in any common sense of the word?)

Even if we were a "nation of immigrants," it does not explain why we should be against sensible immigration control. And if the open-borders advocates would actually read American history instead of revising it, they would see that the founding fathers were emphatically insistent on protecting the country against indiscriminate mass immigration. They insisted on assimilation as a pre-condition, not an afterthought. Historian John Fonte assembled their wisdom:

– George Washington, in a letter to John Adams, stated that immigrants should be absorbed into American life so that "by an intermixture with our people, they, or their descendants, get assimilated to our customs, measures, laws: in a word soon become one people."

– In a 1790 speech to Congress on the naturalization of immigrants, James Madison stated that America should welcome the immigrant who could assimilate, but exclude the immigrant who could not readily "incorporate himself into our society."

– Alexander Hamilton wrote in 1802: "The safety of a republic depends essentially on the energy of a common national sentiment; on a uniformity of principles and habits; on the exemption of the citizens from foreign bias and prejudice; and on that love of country which will almost invariably be found to be closely connected with birth, education and family."

– Hamilton further warned that "The United States have already felt the evils of incorporating a large number of foreigners into their national mass; by promoting in different classes different predilections in favor of particular foreign nations, and antipathies against others, it has served very much to divide the community and to distract our councils."

It has been often likely to compromise the interests of our own country in favor of another. The permanent effect of such a policy will be, that in times of great public danger there will be always a numerous body of men, of whom there may be just grounds of distrust; the suspicion alone will weaken the strength of the nation, but their force may be actually employed in assisting an invader."

– The survival of the American republic, Hamilton maintained, depends upon "the preservation of a national spirit and a national character." "To admit foreigners indiscriminately to the rights of citizens the moment they put foot in our country would be nothing less than to admit the Grecian horse into the

citadel of our liberty and sovereignty."

We are not a nation of immigrants. We are first and foremost a nation of laws. The U.S. Constitution does not say that the paramount duty of government is to "Celebrate Diversity" or to "embrace multiculturalism" or to give "every willing worker" in the world a job. The Preamble to the U.S. Constitution says the Constitution was established "to provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty."

As our founding fathers recognized, fulfilling these fundamental duties is impossible without an orderly immigration and entrance system that discriminates in favor of those willing, as George Washington put it, to "get assimilated to our customs, measures [and] laws."

Lest there be any doubt this Independence Day about the perils of ignoring the founding fathers' advice, I invite you to contemplate the abyss at Ground Zero. "The safety of the republic" is indeed at stake.

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