

## EXPLORING IMMIGRATION

### MODULE 7

SPEAKER It's a beautiful day to become a citizen. 00:00:54

[APPLAUSE 00:00:56]

NARRATOR Like a fast beating metronome, the world's population continues to grow, rapidly and steadily, at a rate of approximately 150 people per minute. Since 1960, our population has grown from 180 million to more than 320 million. In the United States, immigration is what drives population growth. 00:01:36

The major categories and this continuing influx contribute approximately 3 million people each year to our population total. 00:01:48

One man determined to do something about population growth and immigration in the United States is Dr. Dale Herder of Charlevoix, up the west coast of Lake Michigan from Holland. A retired college administrator and Naval Reserve officer, he is a dedicated citizen activist who puts aside his love of sailing for advocacy of what he calls "a rational immigration policy." 00:02:15

HERDER Our current conundrum regarding immigration in my opinion, and this is in the context of the soon to conclude administration of President Obama, is such that it can be compared with the Gordian Knot. I think the Gordian Knot is unlikely to be untied, therefore it might have to be cut. 00:02:40

And one thing has to happen in my opinion as a citizen activist and as an American who is concerned about the future of our country, and that is that the Knot has to be released. 00:02:53

How will that Gordian Knot be cut? I think one of two ways, and I think it will. One way will be because we learn from Europe. What is happening in Europe today is most educational. The influx of refugees, particularly from the Middle East, but also from northern Africa and central Africa, I think is a lesson we should be studying carefully; and use what we learn from the European experience that is current, as we go forward. 00:03:27

The second thing that might cut the Gordian Knot, and I hesitate to even talk about it, is another tragic attack on the United States; particularly, if as in the case of 9/11, the perpetrators are illegals. 00:03:42

**NARRATOR** A major reason for Dr. Herder's pessimism is the continuing stagnation of the debate about the meeting of immigration reform since the Reagan years. But he believes his rational point of view will win out in the end. 00:03:56

**HERDER** I think of myself as a realistic optimist. And even though this is a challenge that's enormous, I'm going to continue to work as a citizen activist and I'm going to encourage my friends and colleagues to do the same. 00:04:10

A blend of rationality and compassion is where we need to be as a nation and where we always have been as a nation. But the left I think wants more compassion, more family reunification, and cynics on the right would say more voters. 00:04:27

No more amnesty, no more talk of amnesty. Don't create an incentive for people around the world to say if my daughter gets in she can stay, because they all will want to come. We can't afford it. We can't sustain it. 00:04:45

**NARRATOR** Dr. Herder's personal hero of the immigration battle is the late Barbara Jordan who headed the U.S. Commission on Immigration

Reform during the early years of the Clinton administration.

00:04:57

HERDER The U.S. Immigration Commission was created in the 1990's and for a lot of us it was seen as the best hope. It turns out that it was the last best hope for what I consider to be rational immigration reform.

00:05:13

President Clinton appointed retired Congresswoman Barbara Jordan to chair this Commission, bi-partisan commission. Its findings were nearly unanimous. She worked at it with her Commission for several years. The report came out in 1994 as a preliminary report. 00:05:33

CLINTON All Americans, not only in the states most heavily affected, but in everyplace in this country, are rightly disturbed by the large numbers of illegal aliens entering our country. 00:05:47

The jobs they hold might otherwise be held by citizens or legal immigrants. The public service they use impose burdens on our taxpayers. That's why our administration has moved aggressively to secure our borders more by hiring a record number of new border guards, by deporting twice as many criminal aliens as ever before, by cracking down on illegal hiring, by barring welfare benefits to illegal aliens. 00:06:10

In the budget I will present to you, we will try to do more to speed the deportation of illegal aliens who are arrested for crimes, to better identify illegal aliens in the workplace as recommended by the Commission headed by former Congresswoman Barbara Jordan.

00:06:26

We are a nation of immigrants, but we are also a nation of laws. It is wrong and ultimately self-defeating for a nation of immigrants to permit the kind of abuse of our immigration laws we have seen in recent years, and we must do more to stop it. 00:06:43

HERDER Barbara Jordan was a Democrat, African-American, dedicated person who wanted Americanization for immigrants. That's a delicate term nowadays because Americanization isn't agreed to by everybody as a good thing; some see it as pushing our values on others. 00:07:06

The bottom line is that her report was remarkably, I think, balanced and fair and rational. It contained for example the recommendation that we should have a cap on legal immigration, and that cap should be reviewed by Congress periodically and adjusted as needs might dictate. The need, the primary need, the driving need, was national interest. 00:07:33

She recommended, her Commission recommended, a cap of about 550,000 legal immigrants per year. 00:07:40

NARRATOR The Jordan Commission's final report was submitted in 1997. It was largely ignored by the President and Congress. Since then, the concept of immigration reform continues to be hotly debated in Washington from time to time and demonstrations continue to take place, and some Presidents issue Executive Orders; but the law remains unchanged. 00:08:04

Dr. Herder is now a Board Member of FAIR, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, which favors a sharp decrease in the annual number of immigrants legally allowed into the United States. FAIR's opposition in the political arena includes major business organizations, including the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, large and well-funded pro-immigration groups like the National Council of LA RASA and the Catholic Church. 00:08:33

1<sup>ST</sup> MAN As the world's greatest economic power, the United States has an obligation to be more generous in – in immigration. Church teaching looks at the whole world, not just one individual nation. And it says to, you know, we've got rich nations, we've got poor nations. Immigration is a sign of that, it's sort of a – a symptom of a – a world in which there's inequality. 00:08:57

For the United States, the church position is that this is a – a win/win issues because not only are you being generous in immigration which is a humane policy, but we also think and we can bear that out with the facts, that immigrants are good for this country; they've built this country, they fill important jobs, they bring new cultures, new energy to this country. 00:09:22

So in the current situation, in our current era, we believe it's – it's – it's not a hard decision to look at our system and – and retool it so that it is a bit more generous. We want a humane system where they can come in legally and contribute to our country, and I think that's where the church really can be a strong voice in the debate. 00:09:42

The Catholic Church in the United States is an immigrant church, we've grown with the nation. We've help receive the waves of immigrants from Europe, the Irish, the Italians, Eastern Europeans, and we've helped integrate them over the last 200 years; a lot of people don't understand that. We're the largest institution outside of government that welcomes immigrants to this country. 00:10:05

We've got English instruction classes. We have civics instruction. The first place that an immigrant will go is to the local parish and say I need this, I need some help, where can I find a job. And the parish, to the best of their ability, will help them and the dioceses will help them. 00:10:21

Right now in the current system we say no we can't, we can't get you legalized because the system is the way it is; but we're going to try to change the system for you. And so that's really the reason ultimately why the church is in this debate, to help those people that are in our parishes and are in our pews, that in our social service programs, in our hospitals and our schools. 00:10:43

You know immigration in this country is often examined or dissected in terms of economics or in social impact of immigrants or cultural issues, but from the church perspective it's ultimately a humanitarian issue; and this has moral implications because it impacts people in their lives. 00:11:02

So in the upcoming debate, what the faith groups and what the Catholic Church is going to do is try to uphold and raise up the humanitarian issues in this debate, to remind our public officials that these are human beings and that they have lives and that they share the values that all Americans share, that they want to have families, they – they want to worship, they want to contribute to their communities and they work hard, just like all Americans. 00:11:29

Often that's missed in the debate. We get lost in the economics of do they take jobs or do they drain our resources, do they change our neighborhoods, are they going to change what America is about. And all those I believe are legitimate issues to address, but ultimately we need to look at what kind of nation do we want to be and how do we want to embrace the world, how do we want to welcome people from around the world who might not be exactly like us but can help make up our country and make it stronger. 00:12:01

1<sup>st</sup> FEMALE It's always rational for our country to say we're going to configure an immigration policy based on our national interest, that's an absolutely appropriate thing for the United States to do. I don't think anyone has ever successfully demonstrated that reuniting with your closest family members is not in the national interest. 00:12:18

In theory there is a numerical point at which immigration might not be good for the United States. There isn't any evidence to suggest that we are anywhere near that point. The economic evidence shows that immigrants really do quite well, and not just do well for themselves but do well for the country. 00:12:37

The social evidence demonstrates very clearly that immigrants adapt quite well to life in this country, that language acquisition rates, the rate at which people learn English, is as – is the same as it was in the early part of this century; that adoption of our country's most sacred values, participation in the political process, participation in our economic life, participation in our civic life, is stronger in immigrant communities than it is in native communities. 00:13:05

So surely there is a point at which immigration without limit would not benefit this country, but we have limits; and those limits appear to have served us pretty well. 00:13:17

2<sup>nd</sup> MAN Well on – on the whole issue of sustainability, you know can we take all of the immigrant, can we actually afford to legalize, the – the question for us is can we sustain the current system? Can we close the doors and have less immigration at a moment when our own population is graying, at a moment where the replacement statistics are going against us? I think we cannot afford the latter. 00:13:42

The question is, how fast does the United States want us to continue to grow and how competitive does it want to remain in – in coming years, vis-a-vie other countries? Without immigration, economically we are going to diminish without you know the help of these workers. 00:14:00

But when we talk about the numbers, a lot of the discussion is well what is the right number? Let's keep it low, let's keep it high. We believe that it needs to be rational. 00:14:09

HERDER Sadly, President Clinton shelved the Barbara Jordan Report. A tragic situation and done for reasons I can understand, although I disagree with them, that were essentially political. 00:14:24

Congress did not get the baton passed to it from the President, from the Executive, therefore the Legislative Branch did not act; and we've been in a drift ever since. And the drift has led to compassion,

wonderful; compassion is good, unless it becomes irrational and unless it begins to not serve our national interest. 00:14:50

And family reunification as the prime driver for immigration policy in the United States today, in my opinion, is not serving the national interest. We need to know who is coming in. We need to know how many are coming in. We need to know that our laws are rational – rational and fair, and we need to enforce them. 00:15:09

NARRATOR Possible solutions to the immigration conundrum seem limited and long ranged to others who have studied the world's population growth. 00:15:17

3<sup>RD</sup> MAN One of the consequences of a – a sort of an open door policy on immigration is that it takes the pressure off of other governments to deal with the issue. As long as – as Mexico's unemployed can move north of the border in search of jobs and income that they can send home to help sustain the economy - that's a major factor now in the Mexican economy. And as Mexico's oil production drops now and it's dropping very fast, these pressures are going to intensify, because oil is probably close to half of the total revenue in – in – in, you know, for the government of Mexico, and if they lose that it will put enormous pressure on. 00:16:02

So we've got to deal with the population pressure everywhere, and – and we need to be thinking worldwide about how we bring population growth to a halt. And I have written in – many many times in - over the years that the world's leaders, whether the president of the World Bank or the - the Secretary General of the UN or the President of the United States should be talking about the consequences of – of continuing population growth and why we need to be thinking about stopping it too, everywhere. 00:16:38

4<sup>th</sup> MAN What do we do to close the gap between rich and poor parts of the world? What might we do to create jobs in Mexico or Algeria or

Egypt, such that young Mexicans or Algerians or Egyptians would not want to leave to come to Europe or the United States? 00:17:03

Now that becomes a very much more proactive and actually quite radical way of thinking. It's not the negative "keep them out," it's not the medium calibrated "who do we let in" and "who do we not let in." It's saying "how do we deal with the root cause of this," which is their deprivation, their lack of access to good jobs, their lack of hope in their own countries so that's why they start placing hope elsewhere. But that would involve us in you know really serious policy rethinkings. 00:17:41

There's little evidence of such leadership with vision in the developed world today, we're too beset with our short term agendas, our political campaigns, our dealing with pressure groups who are also thinking short term; so our political leaders tend to think short term. 00:18:02

My – my deepest thought is do we need to have another really cathodic experience before we say we really do need to empower international structures and organizations and bodies and international civic society to help handle the challenges of the vast imbalances between north and south and rich and poor and environmentally advantaged and environmentally deprived. Or can we not do it because we don't – we – we can't summon the willpower and the insight and the vision to grasp this nettle now, that we need the awful stimulus of another catastrophe? 00:18:55

CHILDREN SINGING FROM 00:18:58 THROUGH 00:19:37

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