

Change needed to deal with immigrants

Is illegal immigration really a problem? What do we do to fix the situation? The 12 million illegal immigrants estimated to be in the country should be evidence enough that the system is broken. How to fix it is a little harder to figure out.

Illegals come here for a lot of reasons, but mostly it's jobs. Reports show a little more than half are Mexican nationals and a quarter come from other Latin American nations. Almost a million came from Asian countries.

Some entered the country illegally, though the majority sneaked across the border somehow, infiltrating through the desert, hiding in trucks and railroad cars, even coming ashore from boats.

Many want to work, send money home to their families and eventually return. Today, with border crossing becoming more difficult — and dangerous — many choose just to stay once they're here.

The government has no way to track or catch them, let alone the means to deport 12 million people. The U.S. economy would be in a bind without their work.

Politicians like to scare people with talk of terrorists and criminals sneaking over the mountains, but there's little or no evidence that happens. Most terrorists, in fact, came into the country legally as tourists or students.

The real issues are jobs, race and the way immigrants are changing the country. As Americans always have, people tend to see newcomers as different. Even those whose parents came through Ellis Island less than a century ago can be found protesting the new immigrants.

People didn't treat the Italian, Irish or Croatian immigrants of a century ago very well, either. But they stayed, prospered and became Americans. There's every indication that most modern immigrants will do the same.

What can we do?

First things first. Being here illegally is wrong. Having 12 million illegal immigrants — maybe more, no one counts them — shows our system is horribly flawed.

We need to crack down on illegal immigration, but to do that, we have to make legal immigration possible, civilized and humane. Today, a Mexican citizen who wants to come here to work might have to wait years for a permit. People won't do that when a few hundred dollars will get them across the border to a better life.

And these people are desperate enough to face the dangers of dying in the desert, or in a sealed boxcar, to get here. You can't stop a flow like that, but you can and should control and monitor it.

Next, we should offer no state benefits to immigrants. Workers who pay taxes should be able to get a driver's license, send their kids to school and, should they retire here, collect benefits they paid for.

There is just no obligation to give illegal immigrants welfare or other benefits they have not paid for. If they are not working and can't support themselves, they'd be better off at home.

Finally, we should be suspicious of government officials who want tight border controls. There's an element in government that wants to know everything — who does what, goes where, has how much — but that information can be used for a lot of reasons.

We need to ask ourselves if we are ready to deal with a government with that kind of power, or if government can be trusted that much.

The bottom line is, immigration reform, badly as it's needed, isn't likely to happen any time soon. It makes too much sense.

— Steve Haynes



Nothing like a new '2007 Cataract'

Funny how people understand situations others overhear and pass along. I am a victim of sorts. Someone told someone they overheard someone say I was in Hays a couple of days ago looking at Cadillacs. You know how I keep beating the drum for Norton people to do their shopping at home? I run those small, free teaser ads throughout the newspaper. In doing so I hope the "shop at home" theme sticks.

So why would I get to Hays if I was interested in buying a Cadillac? I wouldn't. I would buy right here. Of course a Cadillac is beyond my capacity, so that in itself was a misunderstanding. Here's the chuckle: I was in Hays to undergo a cataract procedure! Cataract, Cadillac, there's the culprit. So I guess when someone asks me henceforth what kind of vehicle I drive, I'll simply tell them, "a cataract, of course."

-td-

The weatherman is calling for a winter snowstorm (sorry, weatherman, it's a spring snowstorm), that should already have started poking its nose into north-west Kansas. Initial reports said we could get up to a foot of blowing snow. Guess it could be called a blizzard. As I write this Thursday, there is no hint of an approaching storm, but it's supposed to hit overnight and keep us on guard through Saturday. If you are reading this column Friday, then the storm didn't materialize or its arrival has been delayed. If it is as bad as predicted, then all roads would, without question, be closed and getting and distributing the paper would have been

Good Evening Norton

Tom Dreiling



put on hold. Time will tell.

-td-

Let's see if I got this right: DNA has found the biological daddy of Anna Nicole Smith's baby; a lock has been put on the mouth of early-morning, popular talk show host Don Imus; the three Duke University lacrosse players were cleared of any wrongdoing in the much hyped rape case in North Carolina; House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is back from her mini-diplomatic trip to Syria and other places in that region, and has brushed aside President Bush's criticism; Congress decided an Easter recess was more important than staying in Washington to tackle hot-button issues; Republican presidential front-runner Rudy Giuliani is beginning to feel the sting reserved for a candidate in that position by a press relentless in digging up dirt; how unfairly some of the American Idol contestants are judged; and Atty. Gen. Gonzales might be forced to give up the "general" in his title for the way the firing of eight U.S. Attorneys was handled.

I'm trying to figure out how these topics affect the pocketbooks of American families. Please let me know what I am

overlooking.

-td-

I will let the following e-mail stand by itself without comment. It comes from our popular columnist Liza Deines (on the other end of the state), and carries this question: "Whaddya think?" It reads:

"From the 'think tank' table (my group of curmudgeon buddies) where I sometimes eat lunch! Are we mean and nasty oldsters or extremely creative geniuses?"

"If Bush wants us to cut the amount of gas we use: The best way to stop using so much gas is to deport 11 million illegal immigrants! That would be 11 million less people using our gas. The price of gas would have to come down as a result."

"New Immigration Plan: Bring our troops home from Iraq to guard the border. When they catch an illegal immigrant crossing the border, hand him a canteen, rifle and some ammo and ship him to Iraq. Tell him if he wants to come to America, then he must serve a tour in the military. Give him a soldier's pay while he's there and tax him on it. After his tour, he will be allowed to become a citizen since he defended this country. He will also be registered to be taxed and be a legal patriot. This option will probably deter illegal immigration and provide a solution for the troops in Iraq, and the aliens trying to make a better life for themselves. If they refuse to serve, ship them to Iraq anyway, without the canteen, rifle ammo. Problem solved."

-td-

Have a good evening and weekend. Include church in your plans.

Thumbs Up to . . .

✓ Joe Durham, for all of your hard work in getting the baseball program going! (e-mail)

✓ Norton BB Gun team, good luck at state! (e-mail)

✓ Good Samaritan teenager, good thing you were faster than the dog. (by telephone)

Some post-March Madness thoughts

March Madness is over. I can't explain why, but I have been a Florida fan since last year's tournament, so all was right in my world when they repeated as the men's champions. I, the lover of the underdog, cheered for Florida from start to finish.

It makes no sense. They got to be the national champs in football, also. I usually hate the schools that seem to live under a lucky star, the ones that never appear to have to fight adversity.

But, in some ways, Florida was a long shot. How amazing is it that the starting five, who could have gone pro, stayed at Florida. It was a special team. Four of the five starters could have returned for yet another season but they won't and I don't blame them. I thank them for the season and the tournament they have given us and wish them well.

Looking closer to home I was very disappointed (but not really surprised) that Bob Huggins chose to leave Kansas State after only one season.

A good friend and avid Jayhawk supporter had been telling me how great K-State would be next year. It might have looked that way for a nanosecond. But where do you suppose all those blue chip recruits are going now that Huggins is

Back Home

Nancy Hagman



leaving?

Huggins reminds me of the character Jake in Larry McMurtry's novel, "Lonesome Dove." Jake, McMurtry says: "He was a pretty weak vessel to put much hope in."

Although it bodes ill for basketball at KSU, I was happy with the season Huggins gave us. Before the tournaments I was carping to my brother about how it seems that sports fans can't just enjoy the moment. Instead of being happy about today's win we still complain about last week's loss.

We complain about the coach, the officiating, the players, the fans. Even when Kansas was winning by 30 or 40 points my KU friend was complaining.

I told my brother, "Why are the only people allowed to be happy are the national champions, why is everyone else so

miserable?" My brother said, "You have been a K-State fan too long!"

It did bother me that KSU did not get an NCAA bid. It seemed like every time they did what the talking heads said they had to do to get a bid, there would be yet another condition. But we got to go to the NIT. I thought sports were supposed to reflect life. In life you have to take what you are given and make the best of it.

I told my KU friend it was just as well the Jayhawks lost when they did because even if they had won the national championship the fans would not have been happy. Because Sasha Kaun doesn't get enough rebounds, because Bill Self isn't emotional enough, because they lost to Texas A&M.

Bill Self may not have won Kansas a national championship (yet) but so far he has been loyal. That is what bugs me about Bob Huggins, Billy Gillespe, and the McDonald's All Americans! It seems their loyalty is to themselves. I enjoy the NCAA tournament but in general, college basketball is a mess. Those of us who enjoyed seeing the Gators play and win this year have a nice memory to hold on to.

I may be overly cynical but I believe in the years to come the level of commitment they have shown to their team and their school is going to be just that: A memory!

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