

CARNEGIE COUNCIL *for Ethics in International Affairs*

Immigration Reform: Truths, Myths, and Politics

Public Affairs

Edward Schumacher-Matos, Joanne J. Myers

Transcript

Introduction

JOANNE MYERS: Good afternoon. I'm Joanne Myers, and on behalf of the Carnegie Council it is my pleasure to welcome you to this Public Affairs program.

Our speaker today is Edward Schumacher-Matos, and today he'll be speaking to us about the ethics of immigration.

One of the Carnegie Council's [Centennial](#) themes, and one that we will be exploring throughout this year and next, is citizenship and differences. As such, we are very fortunate to have as our speaker someone who has been thinking and writing about these issues for some time now.

I'd also like to thank [Violy McCausland-Seve](#), one of our trustees, for introducing Edward to us.

We in America are, of course, a nation of immigrants. More than any other country, our national identity is based on a set of ideals that have been enriched and reinvigorated by immigrants, most of whom have attached themselves fervently to core American values. Even so, here in America over the past several decades, a huge percentage of immigrants have entered and remained in this country [illegally](#), causing concern and reigniting the recognition for the need for comprehensive immigration reform. It is an issue that, even with the Senate's passing of a broad immigration [bill](#) in June, regrettably, seems to be on the back burner for now.

Whether in America or around the world, debates about immigration always raise basic and, often the same, ethical questions. For example, how do you reconcile competing claims around core moral values of equality and social justice? How does one deal peacefully and inclusively with groups that are not considered citizens? Moreover, if immigration processes are well-managed, in time won't the society emerge greatly enriched, with more interesting and rewarding lives for all its members? Isn't immigration vital to the country's future, fueling its growth, vibrancy, and creativity?

Having spent more than three decades as a reporter and editor, our speaker has an intimate familiarity covering immigration issues. In fact, his *Washington Post* [column](#) focused on this very issue. Multitalented as he is, for nearly four years, Edward wrote this column while at Harvard. While there, he was also the Robert F. Kennedy Visiting Professor in Latin American Studies at the Kennedy School of Government, a Shorenstein Fellow on the press, politics and public policy, and director of the Migration and Integration Studies Program at the Population Center. How he found time to do all this is a testament to his intelligence, creativity, and endless energy.

Over the course of his career, Edward has earned a deserved reputation for fairness, ethical

reporting, and professionalism, which I am sure were just a few of the many reasons he was recently named the ombudsman of NPR (National Public Radio). Earlier this summer, I had the pleasure of meeting Edward. From this meeting and subsequent exchanges, I can confidently predict an interesting, insightful, and an intelligent discussion on a very contentious topic. I am delighted that he has accepted our invitation to speak here this afternoon.

Please join me in giving Edward a very warm welcome to the Carnegie Council. Thank you.

Remarks

EDWARD SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Thank you so much, Joanne.

I'm so glad that you framed it as an ethical issue. I know that the Carnegie Council thinks about that, which it's famous for, and it's just wonderful that you guys look at foreign policy and ethics, and ethics in its many various dimensions. As we know, once you start talking about ethical values, you can come up with a lot of different things to balance against each other. So I want to do a lot of that today.

I'm not here to advocate for any particular point of view. We will all have our own final views on what immigration policies the country should follow. And I couldn't do it anyway in my position at NPR.

What I hope to do is to analyze what we know and what we don't know about immigration as it has affected the United States and how it might play out in the future. I want to put it in some sort of a global context as well, and then, finally, come back to the ethical issue, because that's the one I actually think is at the core of the whole debate. And it's not mentioned, it's not really talked about, like it should be.

First, I want to begin with a little understood fact: The great wave of illegal immigration is over. It began in the 1970s, built in the 1980s, crested in the early 2000s, and now it's done. It's finished.

I'm not saying that we're going to have no more illegal immigrants or undocumented immigrants, or however you want to call them. (I don't want to get into the debate here, and I'll come back to this point of what language you should use.) There will always be illegal immigration into this country and into almost every country in the world.

But the number of illegal immigrants entering the country is now back to the level it was around 1970. The net number is around zero. Roughly as many people are leaving the country who are undocumented as are coming into the country. It has been this way now for several years. Some of it has been due to the [recession](#), without a doubt. But there are other, longer-term trends that are taking place that we have to recognize.

One is that enforcement works. It has an impact. It has to, if you think about it.

Secondly, is that the demographic pressure coming up from out of, particularly, Mexico has changed dramatically. The birth rate in Mexico is now down to replacement levels. The Mexican population is still growing at a fast rate, but that's from all those mothers of child-rearing age. It takes a while for the whole wave to work its way demographically through the population. So you still have a lot of mothers of child-rearing age, but they're only having 2.2 kids per woman on average. Already the number of 18-year-olds is going down, and that trend is just going to continue down, down, down, down.

And Mexico is really the country we have to look at when we talk about undocumented immigration, because it's our neighbor. More than half of the undocumented immigrants are Mexican. They are the largest source of immigrants, legal and illegal, in the country. It's easiest to come in from there. That's where we've had that tremendous wage gap between what you can make in this country and what you can make there.

But Mexico itself is a vibrant country. It is not right to look at Mexico as some place of economic misery. That's not to say there's not poverty in Mexico, because of course there is. But the Mexican economy has been growing faster than the American economy for the last two years. The two great middle income stories, aside from the BRIC countries (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) that we hear so much about, are Mexico and Turkey. Mexico is now receiving immigrants the way the United States does. So is Turkey.

There are 1 million U.S. immigrants in Mexico today, compared to about 11 or 12 million Mexicans here. But, to give you some sense, there's this reverse-migration going on. So it's not just migration going to India or to China, but also to Mexico. I don't just mean Mexican people of Mexican descent, but all sorts of Americans are going there in search of opportunity.

This is not to say that there's not more opportunity here in general—it's a bigger economy. But there's a dynamism in Mexico today, and it has been going on for much longer than we realize because we've been so focused on all the [violence](#) and all the issues down there—all of which are true—but if you look beyond that, there's this great economic story going on in Mexico.

So much of the new immigration that is coming into the country illegally is actually coming out of Central America. But those are small countries. They're nothing in the greater scheme of things. Now, they have tremendous problems. That's still where you have the violence, that's still where you have the high birth rates, in countries like Honduras and Guatemala and so forth. Actually, Guatemala economically seems to be finally taking off some. But Honduras is having a hard time, as are a few other countries in Central America.

And it's also coming from people who come here on visas and overstay them. Those are university students. They're not high school dropouts. Meanwhile, the education levels in Mexico are all going up, as they are going up everywhere else in the world.

So the immigration picture that we've had, and this great, great wave that we have had—the wave of immigration from the 1970s and 1980s—until now has been equal. Now about 13–14 percent of the country is foreign-born. That's what it was in the [Ellis Island](#) era, 1880–1920. We are as much an immigrant country now as we have been in our history. It has gone up and down over time, but the two great peaks are then and now. But we've hit that peak and it is starting to come down, with all the implications that might have, which I'll get into.

Just today, Pew released its latest [numbers](#) on undocumented immigrants in the country. They redid their methodology a little bit, and they put it at 11.7 million who are here without papers, illegally. But that number, as I say, has been steady now for three, four, five years. It has actually gone down some, come back up slightly, but really it's steady.

That said, it's understandable that there's so much emotion around this issue. Immigration defines who we are. It determines who our neighbors are, who our children are going to be dating, who we're going to be working with, who we're going to be hiring, or who we're going to be working for. It changes the whole complexity of our country. It has changed it so much we are not the same people we were in 1776, and we are not going to be the same people in 2076. We have been evolving. And

how we evolve, of course, affects us all. It's like the club you belong to or the co-op you belong to. You're concerned about who your neighbors are, who you are with, right?

And we're not alone. It's a more toxic situation in Europe than it is here. We think we have an immigration problem. But most of the immigrants who come up from out of Latin America are actually Western. They share Western values. Almost all of them are Christian. In Europe they're dealing with Muslims, who come from a different tradition. So there is a bigger gap between the immigrants and the native Europeans. So here the debate is what to do about undocumented immigration. There the debate is what to do about immigration, period. That they're against legal immigrants—that's the big fight—not just illegal immigrants.

And it's the same in Australia, in Japan, in Korea, even in China. Imagine China! In China, there's this backlash against Africans, North Koreans, and Americans who are going to China in search of their future. The Chinese are saying, "Wait a minute. They're competing for our jobs." It's the same arguments you hear here that you hear in every other country in the world.

Globally, migration has remained at about 3 percent. That is to say that 3 percent of the global population lives in a country where these people weren't born. That figure has been stable for decades now. However, with population growth, in absolute numbers, 3 percent is going through the roof. And that's what you see reflected everywhere. When I say that I think immigration has finally peaked and we're seeing a whole different change going forward, that's not just happening here; it is happening everywhere.

Whereas, up until about three years ago, most of the immigration was from poor countries to rich countries, now it is totally changed. That has come way down here, and everywhere it's the same thing. Immigration is much, much more from rich country to rich country, from rich country to poorer countries. The BRIC countries are attracting so many people, and there is more migration between poor countries. Those other categories are going up, while the concept of going from poor to rich is what is going down.

We think of ourselves as a nation of immigrants. But the truth of the matter is that Canada and Australia have higher percentages of foreign-born than we do. Europe, old Europe, which does not identify itself with immigration, France and Britain are at almost our level; Spain is almost to where we are. So this whole issue is a global issue, is what I mean to say.

Still, we are sort of historically unique, in that we have historically always been more of an immigrant country. We are not based on any kind of an ethnicity. We are not based on a religion. We are as a nation based on an idea. And that made it more open to immigration.

Though there always were fights at each succeeding wave of immigration, there have been two overriding themes in American history. As much as we've been a nation of immigrants, we've been a nation of nativists. We have rejected immigrants as much as we have accepted immigrants.

Every new wave of immigrants has been demonized. Curiously, they have all been made to look black. They have all been given apelike figures and that type of a thing. And they have all been called black. Irish have been called black. Italians have been called black. They're not really black. I'm not saying that they have been treated as black. No, they were literally called black. It was the same for the Slavs. Each successive new group were called black. And they're all pictured as black, which is curious. And each successive new group separated itself from African-Americans, as part of their move up into mainstream America.

Polls show, and they have showed it consistently now for 30 years, that we all say "immigration is good for the country but don't let any more in"—really, two-thirds. And don't think it's just white Americans who say that. Latinos at the exact same rate say the exact same thing: "I'm here. Shut the door behind me."

That changes in periods of low immigration. This is what's curious. In the period between the 1920s and 1965, when we had these immigration [quotas](#) and the percentage fell to a historic low, where about 4 or 5 percent of the country was foreign-born, nothing more, and the percentage of immigrants coming each year were measured in 100,000 or 200,000, no more, then the acceptance for immigration was higher. People said, "Let more in." But nobody pushed to raise the quotas.

The second thing is that immigration has always been an issue of strange bedfellows politically. It has not been a Republican-vs.-Democrat issue. It is not a right-vs.-left issue. It is, on the one side, the business community, which we identify as Republican, being more or less conservative, united with the humanitarian left, with the churches, in particular the Catholic Church, the Jewish church, and the mainstream Protestant churches. And then, on the other side, you had the unions and most working-class Americans, who saw them as competition, and the evangelical churches sort of stayed over there. That is changing in the last year. It's changing a little bit. I'll come back a little bit to why and what that represents.

So where does that leave us then today? What does it all mean for today?

I think that the issue really is not what to do with stopping immigrants coming into the country. This is not to say we shouldn't; I'm not trying to say that. But that's not where the real challenge is today, as we've thrown so much more in the way of border patrol and putting so much more technology in drones and all this type of stuff. Slowly we're improving the enforcement on businesses that hire undocumented immigrants. Slowly we're getting a great track of things, such as how long people overstay their visas. That's still a long way off from solidifying, but there's progress being made on that. The enforcement effort continues to be tougher and tougher and tougher. At the same time, the [president](#) has deported record numbers of undocumented immigrants, which I will return to.

But the real issue is what to do with those 11–12 million people who are here illegally but part of our communities today. Overwhelmingly, they have been here five, ten years, and more, and are integrally American. We as a nation essentially had open borders throughout the early period of our history. We didn't even have a border patrol until 1920. The border was open. It was a line on a map.

We didn't begin to actually enforce any kind of immigration laws until the 1880s, when we prevented Chinese from coming in with the [Chinese Exclusion Act](#). That was the first attempt to do anything against an immigrant group. That grew out of the issue in California and the West and a backlash against the Chinese.

Then came the 1920s, with the quotas I told you about.

Then, in 1965—and this is the key date for what we are living through today—we reopened the country with a [law](#) that was born in the idealism of the [civil rights era](#) but had tremendous unintended consequences. We did two things.

On the side of illegal immigration, we killed the [Bracero program](#), which was a temporary worker program of workers coming up from Mexico to legally work in the fields here. [Edward R. Murrow](#) then did this huge series on abuses against temporary workers in Florida. There were so many reports of abuses that were true—not all, clearly. How extensive it was I don't know, but enough that it really

had this huge backlash in the civil rights community against temporary workers. Not just the civilized community, but unions always opposed a temporary worker program. They still do today, by the way.

Then, secondly, we introduced something that we really didn't have before in a major way, and that was family reunification as a primary way for admitting legal immigrants into the country. When that law was passed in 1965, President [Johnson](#), Senator [Kennedy](#), [Robert F. Kennedy](#) when he was attorney general, every one of them kept testifying—there's a million public statements by all these guys—saying, "What this law does is really correct those old quotas which favored northern Europeans to begin to let others from the rest of the world come into the country, but the overall level of people coming into the country will more or less stay the same."

Boy, where they wrong! Legal immigration quickly ballooned from just around 200,000, to being over 1 million a year. And that has held steady now for many, many years—1.1, 1.2 million a year—plus another group who are coming into various temporary worker schemes—not so many for the workers that replaced the Bracero program but all kinds of other immigration programs. This gets the number up much, much higher, to around 1.6, 1.7 million.

The country launched into another era of mass migration, without anybody approving it, without anybody knowing what they were doing. We did not plan what we have today, either on the legal side or on the illegal side.

In 1986, there was a movement to try and correct that when they had the famous [amnesty](#) done under [Reagan](#), in which they gave amnesty to almost 3 million—actually, they offered it to like 3.6 but only 2.6–2.7 took it—to be able to stay here legally. Everybody knew that that amnesty was a sham and was not going to work, because everybody knew that you did not have an enforcement program and you did not have—and this is crucial—a temporary worker program that gave you a channel for workers to come up, particularly agricultural workers, and work legally in the country.

Right now, the demonizing is always of those poor immigrants who come up looking for work, when the businesses that hire them are just as complicit in any kind of illegal immigration that comes across the border. It's a two-way bargain. It began out of the Southwest and in California, but it is really present in other parts of the country too—among those of us who have undocumented immigrants as maids or as nannies, for example.

There's this whole sense of "these guys are invading our country." Wait a minute. We're inviting them—maybe not legally out of Washington, but as a society so many of us are inviting them. Maybe all of us didn't buy into it—and this is the whole [Tea Party](#) argument—but we as a nation invited them as much as they came. So if there's any kind of blame for being illegal, it cuts both ways.

So much of the fight has gone on in regards to things like crime. You hear all of the complaints about crime by illegal immigrants. It's nonsense. Immigrants, including illegal immigrants, commit crimes at a rate of four to six times less than the rest of Americans, including white middle-class Americans. It makes sense if you think about it. Most of the people who come here just come to work; they don't come to commit crime. Or, if you are here illegally, the last thing you want to do is get caught doing something you shouldn't do.

Then there's the whole economic argument: "They cost us so much money." Well, what really is the situation?

There is, in fact, a short-term fiscal cost by immigrants, including illegal immigrants. It's true. The humanitarians want to deny it, but it's true. Study after study after study shows it. It especially

happens at the local level. It only makes sense, if you think about it. What is the most expensive thing that we pay taxes for at the local level? Schools. These are young adults with young children. Their children are in the schools and other local services. All low and middle-class Americans get more in services than they pay in taxes. It's a factor of your income and of your age and of having children.

You hear that the immigrants are clogging up our emergency rooms. And there is some truth to that. But also immigrants, including illegal immigrants, use health services much less than the rest of Americans, about half as much. Why? Because they're younger and they're healthier. It's just a simple fact of age, of demographics. Some of it is when they first get here, too, they come out of a healthier diet, though that gets lost. About 10 years after Latinos get here, unfortunately, they pick up some of our bad habits.

Let me say one other thing at the state level. So much of the opposition you find in Texas, Arkansas, Nebraska, those sorts of states, the states that aren't generous states for services, those states run a surplus, not at the local level but at the state level. Study after study shows this. Studies done not by outsiders, done in state, including by the state governments, show that those states actually run a surplus on immigrants, including illegal immigrants—the state, not the local community.

So then let's go up to the federal level. At the federal level, immigrants in general are a net fiscal benefit. Unauthorized/undocumented immigrants, unfortunately, are not. They don't get things like food stamps, because they can't get it. They don't get welfare. They don't get any of the need-based programs. Those things are so controlled they don't get them. They don't apply for them; they're afraid to. As we all know, for the most part they almost all work very hard.

Even if you're legal with a green card, you have to be here for five years before you're eligible to get any of those need-based programs. Only if you become a citizen do you suddenly become eligible for all those programs.

Social Security, on the other hand, has benefited, even from illegal immigrants, because many undocumented immigrants actually pay Social Security. But they can't collect it because they're paying under a false name.

In sum, immigrants as a group, because of what happens at the local level, do in fact use more in federal, state, and local services than they pay in taxes. But as I say, that includes those immigrant children and children who are born here, the argument being you wouldn't have those children if the immigrants weren't here. Well now, this is a curious ethical conceptual argument: Should you see those children as immigrants or as Americans? Should you see them as a cost or should you see them as an investment in the future? And it's the same for all children.

The truth of the matter is, in the great scheme of government budgets, what we pay for immigrants is just a drop in the bucket. It really is nothing.

A big study by the National Research Council showed that college graduates coming to the country in fact are a fiscal surplus from day one. They pay more in taxes than they receive because they have higher incomes. High school graduates pay everything that they receive back in their lifetime. The first two years they receive more than they pay, but by the time they die they have paid more in taxes than they received over the course of their lifetime.

It is those high school dropouts, that great mass of mostly undocumented immigrants who have come across the border, who do not pay back what they cost fiscally in their lifetime, and not for 300

years according to this study. Now, we have to wait 300 years to see if that really plays out. But I wouldn't put my hand in the fire over that. But you get the picture that they cost us fiscally more than college graduates. It makes sense. One begins to think: "Oh, what should we be doing with immigration policy? You take that into account, right?"

But let's look over on the other side. Let's look over at the real economy. Let's look at national income and growth, the bottom line on that. There is an immigration surplus. Immigrants bring down the cost of labor, more money goes into capital, cheap labor, lower prices, et cetera. This leads to what's called an immigration surplus.

How much is that immigration surplus? Economic studies have looked at this thing and they come back and they estimate 0.1 percent of GDP. How much is that fiscal cost I mentioned? It is 0.2 percent of GDP. Wait a minute. You have in your mind that this immigration is either really causing this huge boom in the economy or it's really costing the economy. But really it's nothing more than a rounding error in our gross national product, in our national economy. This whole economic issue is blown way out of proportion, is what I'm trying to say. It's really a wash. These numbers are rounding errors in our economy.

That is not to say that there aren't some long-term benefits that are hard to measure. That happens particularly with high-tech immigration. But now you're talking about a small number of immigrants. You're talking about the fact that a quarter of all the patents today are held by foreign-born Americans. Half of the baccalaureates today in science and engineering are held by immigrants. A quarter of the tech companies founded between 1995 and 2005 were founded by immigrants. So that says something about really pushing the growth sectors of our economy at that high-tech end.

Even low-income immigrants, poor Mexicans who come across the border, start businesses at a much higher rate than native whites do. They are more entrepreneurial. It may be just a little taco stand, but it's a new business creating wealth.

So really, really, despite the economic debate, despite the talking about taxes, despite the talking about crime and all that, what's really behind the tension that we have in the country? That's why I want to come back to this ethical issue.

It's an anxiety. It's an anxiety about our values, about who we are. It's a sense that somehow the country is being changed, and it's being changed at such a fast rate we're scared—or many of us are scared, not all of us. There are those of us who aren't thinking of the nation, who are thinking of just people, the humanitarians who have these universal values, who don't think so much about the concept of the nation-state and, "We're Americans, you're Mexicans" ("No, we're just all people"). This is a perfectly, as we understand it, ethical/moral point of view. These people don't share that anxiety—that who we are is what's at stake here, especially when it's happening so fast—that many, the great mass, I would say, of Americans share; or Europeans, or Australians, or even Chinese, if we went around the globe

We are going to be a majority non-white country in the next 30, 40, 50 years. California already is, Texas already is—our two largest states—and the rest of the country is moving in that direction.

Race is one thing, ethnicity is one thing, and values of course are another. But one worries that all these new people coming in of different colors—do they share our values? They look differently from us, so we don't know. I'm trying to say the popular reaction. I've studied a lot about what values I think they share.

On the universal side, it's the [Golden Rule](#). It's the [parable of the Good Samaritan](#). It's the concept that's in the [Bible](#) of taking care of the stranger—not just the Christian Bible and the [Jewish Bible](#); in the [Muslim Bible](#) too. We talk about Judeo-Christian values, but really all of the [Abrahamic faiths](#) have that.

That leads us to begin to be very concerned about the immigrants themselves. That is partly behind this thing of "we can't call them illegal immigrants; that's too demonizing" or "undocumented." In Europe, it's "irregular immigrants"; that's what they all say.

That open borders argument, on the ethical side, is best framed by [Joseph Carens](#). He is leading this idea of open borders from a humanitarian point of view.

Business wants open borders, on the argument of cheaper labor, more growth. It's a whole growth argument that tries to argue that—it's the libertarian argument—we'll all be better off by just having higher growth and it will pay off in the long run, and it will be to everybody's benefit.

On the other side, you have the argument that is led by [Michael Walzer](#), in terms of political philosophy and ethical issues.

And you've got the arguments led by moral psychology. At NYU, there's a fellow named [Jon Haidt](#), who has done tremendous research. He's a moral psychologist—there is such a thing—about the difference between conservatives and liberals, and in this case between that great mass and the cosmopolitan/humanitarian/business set. What he finds is that we all share values of fairness, of the concept that I know you guys have talked a lot about in here, I'm sure, of harm principle, all those sorts of things that we as a secular liberal society try to push to have the sort of society we want.

But conservatives—and by this I don't mean libertarians now—have a couple of additional values that the rest of us don't share as strongly. That is they really believe in somebody deserving what they get. They are much more focused on the community as a value, maintaining the community. They are much more focused on the parts of the Bible that—and most of these I say "Bible" because most of them are Christian—talk about obeying the law, about justice, obeying the ruler. This is the evangelical churches too; this is where they come in. Some of it is because they have this fearful, angry God.

But some of it, even the ones that are more "let's all make money" kind of a thing, also have stayed out of this fight until recently, and really believe in "we've got to play by the rules." That is a value, and it's an honest value. It is too easy to condemn the anti-immigrant forces as being racist. It's too easy to condemn them as being nativists. I'm not saying that there aren't some, because there are. But these are just different values. It's a different ethical sense.

If you think about it, there is a whole ethical paradox around immigration, and it's an argument that you only see at the level of the ethicists arguing it. Unfortunately, we don't see it in our political debate. That maybe would help us understand each other much more, if we talked about it openly.

It is that if you believe in all these values, the secular liberal values that we have in this country and have made this country and if you want to have the social welfare system that we have, and if you want to support the poorest of the country—and that's who, all the economic studies show, are most impacted by immigration, not the rest of the country—you've got to defend the system a little bit.

If the system gets undermined, you can't offer all those things. There is the paradox: Where is the balance between being able to offer the kinds of things you want to do and support that humanitarian

sense you want to have?

There is a whole change that has taken place in the world because of globalization. No longer is the neighbor just one or two people who show up on your doorstep. With globalization now, the scale has changed. So does that mean you have to rethink the ethics of it all? Do you see where I'm coming at?

Let me stop with that. Let me open it up to questions.

JOANNE MYERS: I thank you very much for making us think about these issues in a different way. I just want to say that, for those of you who are interested, [Jonathan Haidt](#) did speak here before, and [Michael Walzer](#). You can go to our website and access their talks here. Thank you for just mentioning them. *[Editor's note: In addition, [Joseph Carens](#) has written for the Council's journal, Ethics & International Affairs. Click on the authors' names in this paragraph for access to their talks and writings.]*

Questions

QUESTION: James Starkman.

At the beginning of the year, the minimal expectation was for the passage of an immigration reform bill. Apart from at-your-throat politics, the toxic politics, what were the key differences in the Senate bill and what was possibly going to be proposed in the House that led to the non-passage of any legislation?

EDWARD SCHUMACHER-MATOS: There was no major difference between the Senate bill and what a group of congressmen in the House, which actually included a couple of Republicans, wanted to try to do.

The difference is that the Republicans have opposed any kind of comprehensive immigration reform, and they want to cut it into pieces and deal with certain pieces at a time. The piece they want to deal with is the temporary workers first, those sorts of things that benefit certain businesses, and the enforcement.

The Democrats argue that if you deal with temporary workers now and you satisfy all the California growers and the other growers in the country—the farm bloc—they then politically abandon the rest of the effort and the rest of the effort gets lost about what to do with the big issue, which is those undocumented immigrants.

The Republicans in the House also want to bring in more high-tech workers.

QUESTION: Edith Everett.

I believe it's a fact that there would be many fewer doctoral programs in the United States were it not for the large numbers of immigrants who are taking those courses. One of the problems is that these immigrants don't have status; they're sent home. So all this money and effort that has worked for them that could have been for the benefit of this country are not for the benefit of this country because they go home to where they came from. What can be done about that?

EDWARD SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Yes. That's a very good argument, and you're right. Most foreign students who come here do pay higher tuition, but we know it still doesn't cover the real cost

of the education. You can argue that you're contributing to global development everywhere in the world. But if you're paying for it here yourself, and they want to stay here on top of that, so shouldn't you try and do something?

This is curious. Every other country in the world has an immigration policy that tries to manage the skills of the people they bring in, except the United States.

This all comes out of the 1965 law giving total primacy to family reunification. Family reunification is totally understandable from a moral/ethical point of view. But, in terms of what it does for the economy and for the rest of the society, you can argue that the costs of that are higher. And we are not giving enough attention to, as you say, these high-tech people, who, after they have been here and studied for so many years, really come to adapt to our values and system and they like it. Like I say, those folks are not a fiscal burden; they are a fiscal contributor from day one.

QUESTION: Nancy Kirk.

Why didn't Reagan have an enforcement program? Why they did do amnesty without a way of keeping track of people?

EDWARD SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Purely political. They tried to have, as a tradeoff, increased enforcement, and they began to do some more enforcement, more border control; they began to try to do something with businesses. It was totally toothless and it was small potatoes. But it was the beginning of something at least.

Number one, a reason was that the negotiations that pushed that through had, as a cost, that businesses would only sign on if the enforcement was minimal.

And then, the unions would not have a temporary worker program. So the businesses said, "If I can't have a temporary worker program, you can't punish me for having the workers that I need to pick the tomatoes and pick the apples," or whatever it may be. You can understand that argument, right? So it was like the two sides then agreed on the worst of compromises, not the best of compromises.

JOANNE MYERS: I just read last week that California is going in a [new direction](#). Maybe you could comment on that.

EDWARD SCHUMACHER-MATOS: Yes. That's very interesting. The focus that we've had until now has been the movement out of Arizona and Oklahoma, parts of Pennsylvania, et cetera, with the states really pushing all these anti-immigrant measures. So the great fight up until recently, for the last almost decade, has been between the federal government, on the one hand, and the states trying to take over immigration policy and move against unauthorized immigrants in their midst. Arizona has been the lead of that, and I'll come back to talk about Arizona if you'd like to talk about it. Arizona is a fascinating case study.

Now we are beginning to see, as part of the great movement for comprehensive immigration reform, the reverse. We are beginning to see a revival of the old sanctuary movement, some of it from the universalists pushing these things—even the word "sanctuary," if you think about it.

But some of it is a real recognition, and particularly in California—and California is fascinating to look at—that these undocumented immigrants in our midst are part of us. They are now "us." This is especially true in California.

The great wave of illegal immigration across the border first went into California. So it's no mistake that the first backlash against it began in California with Governor [Wilson](#). California actually passed a [referendum](#) to kick all the unauthorized immigrant kids out of the public schools. Imagine that! The State of California, the public voted to kick them out of school. Then a federal court blocked it. But that was in the **1980s**, when all of this first started.

That's when I first started getting really involved in this, even though I'm an immigrant myself and, in fact, was undocumented for many years without ever realizing it. I want that, too.

I went down and spent a lot of time in Tijuana, across the border. You don't want to hear war stories. I was the first reporter to do it.

But in any event, I followed all the way up, this great wave of immigrants going all the way to Los Angeles, all the way up through California. So they had the first backlash.

Today—actually since the 1990s or early 2000s—immigration in California has leveled off. That's no longer growing at all. It's all been going to all the new states. That's why you get all the backlash out of North Carolina, out of Georgia, out of Alabama, states that haven't seen immigrants in 150 years. So it's only natural that you get a backlash, having all these strangers in your midst, particularly when there are large numbers of them, and they are a different color and they speak a different language—"Maybe they're talking about me behind my back; I don't know."

Meanwhile, in California they've settled in. They've bought houses. They've been sending their kids to school. And everybody has seen them move up, and many of them, through the amnesty and through family reunification, are voting. Many of them are still unauthorized, but somehow they find ways to begin getting into the system and even becoming citizens.

California has changed. And as I said, California is now majority minority. We think of Hispanics. But it's not just Hispanics. Asians are as militant on this issue as Hispanics are, and maybe even more so. And with most Asians, now we're talking about a higher income.

So what you now see in California, suddenly, is "let's give them driver's licenses, let's let them work at the polls." While in the Southeast, there is a great movement to restrict, to begin asking for identity for voters, as if there's any voting fraud that goes on—there's not. In California they have a [bill](#) that the [governor](#) now has to sign—I'm sure everybody thinks he'll sign it—in which they'll have undocumented immigrants as poll workers—not voting, but poll workers. And you're going to move towards people voting in local elections.

In Europe, as part of the European Union, if you are a German and you live in Spain, you can vote for the mayor of Valencia, if you live in Valencia; or if you're Spanish and you live in Frankfurt, you can vote for the mayor of Frankfurt. You can't vote in the national elections, but you can vote in local elections. And it makes sense if you think about it. You're a resident, you use those services, you pay local taxes. Shouldn't you have some say in what goes on? Again, it's a universal way of looking at it instead of a national way of looking at it.

But now, this is also sort of practical. You begin to see it. In this country, in the 19th century you didn't have to be a citizen to get all these services and to do so much. We also didn't really care so much about citizenship. That's a 20th century phenomenon, with [World War I](#) and "the Germans are coming" and all that kind of stuff. That's when all the great nationalism and citizenship stuff took off—against Germans!

It's not just in California, but in other parts of the country it's beginning to grow too, in [Connecticut](#) and some other states now. The great movement now is to give them driver's licenses for a practical reason. Now the pragmatic arguments are beginning to rule: "Hey, if we're not giving them a driver's license, they're not insured, they don't get the training. Wait a minute. We're on the roads with them. Shouldn't we? We're all in this together. Better we have some regulation over this and recognize reality instead of trying to, as the Spaniards say, cover the sun with a finger."

JOANNE MYERS: On that note, I think that we'll all ponder that. Thank you, Edward. That was really very interesting.

Audio

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Video Clip

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