

Ryan Everitt
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rwe148@bu.edu / (530) 601-0981
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Op-Ed

A Nation of Immigrants

“Build a wall!” These three words pierce through TV sets, Twitter feeds, and American homes on a daily basis. With the dangerous escalation of the United States’ immigration crisis by the Trump Administration, America needs to reevaluate the ideals of our nation.

As the 2020 presidential election looms, immigration should be a hot button issue. Unfortunately, many middle class citizens feel apathetic toward those being stripped of their humanity while seeking refuge. It is necessary to add nuance to the conversation to make voters aware of the extent of the problem and feel connected to the crisis.

Private prison corporations like CEO Group and CoreCivic as well as companies like Boston’s own Wayfair have received paid contracts for everything from construction to furniture for detention centers. Immigrant detention is now a cash grab at the expense of human rights.

“This is the quintessential American debate. It’s a fight for the soul of the country. It’s not only legal, but it’s political, it’s moral, it’s ideological,” said Dan Kanstroom, law professor at Boston College.

There are many angles to the subject of immigration. For the past 40 years, since the Carter administration began addressing the modern day immigration crisis, activists have attempted to humanize the stories of those who seek a life in the so-called “Land of the Free.”

As a nation, we are stuck in an endless dispute between those who see America as a nation of immigrants and those who see immigrants as different and therefore fear them. The conversation has devolved into a battle against blatant xenophobia.

The issue of immigration reform has been pushed aside by presidential administrations as a sacrifice for “winnable” partisan legislation for decades. Since citizens don’t see the personal impact of the crisis, they ignore it.

In a capitalist society, money talks more than anything. In order to energize the movement, we must look at the economic necessity of immigration. If middle class Americans knew that immigration affected their pockets, they might pay attention.

“The economy connects all of us. One has to find the right conversation [for each region] that strikes close to home,” said Susan Akram, law professor at Boston University.

Despite most viewing Boston as educated and progressive, there is still a deep-seated concern regarding immigrants taking jobs and a growing division in the “us” and the “other” mentality, said Akram.

We need to assess the impact of immigration in Boston through the lens of education, one of the city’s major industries. International students pay the full tuition, and higher education feeds into engineering and medical fields which fuel Boston’s economy.

With 35 colleges and an intense educational standard set by Harvard and MIT, Boston attracts the world's brightest scholars. Without international students, Boston's economy is a bust.

"We are seeing around 30% loss now of international students," said Akram in regards to the consequences of recent travel bans issued by the Trump administration.

In addition to education, immigrants are essential to the agricultural industry and create small businesses and restaurants which expand the local economy. Immigrants are not taking jobs but rather enhancing society.

In many cases, immigrants are forced to work under-the-table jobs that pay less than a living wage. Often, products that we purchase on a daily basis stay at low prices due to the sacrifice of fair wages for immigrant workers.

Even our tax dollars are affected by the crisis; anywhere from 1.8 to 3.1 billion dollars have been spent federally each year from 2010 to 2018 on immigrant detention, according to *Detained*, a documentary on the history of America's immigrant detention system.

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) is federally funded. Therefore, taxpayer money is being spent in the billions to poorly remedy an issue that Americans turn a blind eye to.

If mass incarceration for commercial gain or violent ICE raids are not enough to sway public opinion, then we need to educate citizens on how they are directly affected by the system.

Governmentally, Boston should create programs to legally and financially support those who seek refuge. Tolerance is not enough to earn reform.

Recently, the Safe Communities Act (SCA) has been presented to state officials in Massachusetts. It is meant to reduce the power of the local police force in detaining immigrants and recognize immigrants' legal rights.

SCA presents a good solution to some of the ethical issues which surround the crisis. However, legislation must also seek ways to protect immigrants financially and prove to the public that healthy immigration correlates with a healthy economic stimulus.

In addition, there is a lack of knowledge of the injustices that immigrants face in this nation. Their stories should be a part of all public education to help new generations bridge the gap between the "us" and the "other."

"The system had a bad cold. Now we are facing life threatening pneumonia," said Kanstroom in regards to America's extreme xenophobia in the modern day that the Trump administration increasingly perpetuates.

Without immigration, our economy would crash, our education system would tank, and our culture would become dangerously homogenous.

Sources:

Dan Kanstroom, law professor and Co-director of the Center for Human Rights and International Justice at Boston College

(617) 552-0880

daniel.kanstroom@bc.edu

Susan Akram, law professor and Director of International Human Rights Clinic at Boston University

(617) 358-3060

smakram@bu.edu

Detained, Emily Kassie, The Marshall Project

<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2019/09/24/detained>

Safe Communities Act

<https://www.progressivemass.com/sca#whysca>

Notes:

No huge grammar issues

A lot to tackle in one paper

Needs to relate back to nut graf

Rest of op ed doesn't connect to argument

Nut graf

Empathize or get people to accept
If you want to talk about ethics, you have to get more specific
Talk about how they are stripped of their rights
ICE raids Boston, Mass to localize
How that displays them being stripped of their humanity
Either change nut graf to talk about ethics or economics
Narrow nut graf argument
Align the rest of the op ed with that
At least one more quote
Can be documentary
Bill in Boston for immigration - use as solution
Mostly need to work the beginning
Emotional hook might not work w/ economic argument