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Bush's amnesty agenda actually anti-immigrant

Robert Hardaway, *University of Denver*



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In 1895, Booker T. Washington, the renowned African-American educator, was invited to speak on the nation's immigration policy to a skeptical audience of white businessmen at the Atlanta International Exposition at which the president of the United States also was scheduled to appear.

Decrying what he perceived to be the racist practice of American industry importing

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vast numbers of foreign white laborers in order to avoid having to hire

freed slaves, Washington gave his then famous, but now largely forgotten "Cast down your bucket" speech. He told the story of a sea captain on a ship whose men were dying of thirst. Spying a friendly vessel he called out, "Water, water, send us water!" The master of the friendly vessel, knowing that the sea captain's ship had now entered the fresh water of the mouth of the Amazon River, responded, "Cast down your bucket where you are."

And so, to the captains of industry Washington pleaded: "To those (of you) who look to the incoming of those of foreign birth, 'cast down your bucket where you are,' and we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to interlace our industrial, commercial, and civil, and religious life with yours."

Although the speech was well received (the Boston Transcript said "the speech dwarfed all other proceedings and the Exposition itself; the sensation that it has caused in the press has never been equaled"), the plea fell upon the deaf ears of the titans of industry, who to this day support a policy of importing millions of low-paid white laborers to feed their greed for profits. In 1987, for example, at

a time when the unemployment rate among African-American teenagers approached 80 percent, greedy garment makers in Los Angeles demanded that the INS allow them to import and hire thousands of low-wage foreign workers on grounds that there was an "unskilled labor shortage." Ronald Reagan's ill-fated amnesty program allowed them to do just that, thus dooming millions of Americans to unemployment or dead-end jobs. It is perhaps more than coincidence that the percentage of Americans now unemployed almost precisely equals the number of illegal immigrants in this country.

Proponents of President Bush's "amnesty" agenda purport to represent the interests of immigrants, but nothing could be further from the truth. Teeming millions of hardworking applicants around the world, eager to work at jobs many Americans don't want at low wages and which America's economy needs to fill, wait patiently in line to be considered for legal entry, often for years or even decades, only to see America's corporations pressure the government to give preference to those who have already entered illegally and stolen jobs by violating U.S. Code 1028, which makes it a felony to "knowingly possess a (Social Security) document — produced without lawful authority."

Rather than prosecuting employers who hire such workers, the recently defeated immigration reform legislation would have actually given preference only to those illegal immigrants who could prove that they had committed such felonies as Social Security fraud for a period of years — a provision that, had it passed, would doubtless have made this country a laughing-stock around the world.

Implicit in the campaign for amnesty is that recent legal immigrants support amnesty. In

fact, a poll conducted by Hispanic Opinion and Preference Research Inc. revealed that 70 percent of Hispanics did not want Latin Americans to be given preferential treatment in immigration, not surprisingly, since immigrants are well aware of the economic reality that an influx of illegal immigrants invariably causes the wages of legal immigrants to plummet below the level of subsistence.

The government of Mexico values its own citizenship sufficiently to make it a felony, punishable by two to 10 years of hard labor, to enter that country illegally. While no one is suggesting that the United States follow Mexico's example, Americans should value their own citizenship sufficiently to at least implement a Social Security verification system that would permit prosecution and terms of incarceration for the titans of U.S. industry who seek to gain profit by exploiting their fellow man and flouting U.S. law. Such enforcement, combined with an expedited policy of granting work visas to those seeking legal entry, would render superfluous any need for a wall or indeed any sanction against illegals, as voluntary self-deportation would surely follow the vigorous prosecution of employers, while those jobs would then be filled by the teeming millions now seeking legal entry.

Not only for the teeming millions who seek legal entry and wait patiently for justice, but also for those hardworking legal immigrants already in the country, Bush's amnesty program, like Reagan's amnesty plan before it, is "anti-immigrant" in the cruelest sense of the word.

Robert Hardaway is professor of law at the University Of Denver Sturm College of Law and the author of "Population, Law and the Environment" (Greenwood Press).

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