

High School Lesson

“Walling Out the Unwanted”: Understanding the Barriers that Perpetuate Anti-Immigrant Bias

Rationale

This lesson increases student awareness about the physical and symbolic barriers that create divides between immigrants and native born residents of the U.S., and engages students in an exploration of the ways in which mainstream discourse on immigration can perpetuate bias and bigotry. Students analyze poetry, blog posts, readings and media clips in order to deepen their understanding of the negative consequences of anti-immigrant language. Students also learn about current legislation related to immigration and ways to take action against anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination.

Objectives

- Students will analyze poetry in order to better understand immigration issues.
- Students will learn about the U.S.–Mexico border fence and debate the notion of walls as a strategy for limiting illegal immigration.
- Students will explore the language used to discuss immigration in the mainstream media, and increase their media literacy skills.
- Students will increase their awareness about the repercussions of anti-immigrant discourse and bias.
- Students will learn about current legislation related to immigration.
- Students will develop skills to take action against anti-immigrant bias.

Age Range

Grades 10–12

Time

Part I: 60–90 minutes

Part II: 60–90 minutes

Part III: 30–45 minutes plus time for action projects

Requirements

Handouts and Resources:

- [Mending Wall](#) (one per student)
- [A Voice from the Border](#) (one per student)
- [700-Mile Border Fence Between the United States and Mexico](#) (one per student)
- [Walls or Barriers?](#) (one per student)
- [You've Been Framed!](#) (one per student)
- [Media Analysis: The Framing of Immigration](#) (one per small group)
- [Immigration in the Media: Sample Commentary](#) (one per small group)
- [Excerpt from “Who is to Blame for Marcelo Lucero’s Murder?”](#) (one per student)

Other Material:

- Chart paper, markers
- (Optional) Computer, LCD projector, Internet access
- [Mending Wall](#) audio version
- [US-Mexico Border Fence](#) video

Key Words

Alien
 Amnesty
 Assimilate
 Barrier
 Bias
 Border
 Commentary
 Comprehensive
 Demographic
 Demonize
 Deportation
 Enforcement
 First World
 Immigrant
 Immigration
 Immigration reform
 Legislation
 Mainstream media
 Melting pot
 Minority
 Nativist
 Pundit
 Scapegoat
 Stereotype
 Third World
 Undocumented
 Wedge issue
 Xenophobia

- [Codewords of Hate](#) video
- (Optional) [Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration](#)

Advanced Preparation

- Reproduce handouts as directed above.
- Assign Mending Wall for homework (see step #1).
- Prepare computer, projector and screen (optional).
- Label a sheet of chart paper “700-Mile Border Fence Between the United States and Mexico”.
- Cut sheets of chart paper into strips, about 4–6 inches tall, enough for each student to have one strip.

Techniques and Skills

analyzing poetry, brainstorming, case study, cooperative group work, critical thinking, debate, forming opinions, large and small group discussion, media literacy, reading skills, research skills, social action, substantiating factual information, using the Internet, writing skills

Procedures

Part I: “Something there is that doesn't love a wall” (60–90 minutes)

1. **[Homework Assignment]** Prior to the lesson, have students read “[Mending Wall](#)” by Robert Frost for homework. Assign students to think about or respond in writing to one or more of the questions or topics for further study that follow the poem.
2. Begin the lesson by having volunteers read “Mending Wall” aloud or by playing the [audio version](#) of Robert Frost reading his poem. Discuss some of the questions that you assigned students to think or write about for homework.
3. Divide the class into small groups of 3–4 students and provide each student with a copy of “[A Voice from the Border](#)” by Jorge Nunez. Direct groups to read the poem and discuss some of the questions that follow it. Allow about 10 minutes for discussion.
4. Reconvene the class and discuss some of the following questions:
 - How would you compare “Mending Wall” and “A Voice from the Border”? What themes do both poems have in common?
 - A physical wall is the focal point of both poems. What literal or figurative walls might these be symbols for?
 - What does each poem say about the nature of walls?
 - “Mending Wall” was written in 1914 and some have interpreted the poem as a comment on the growing tendency of the U.S. to isolate itself from the rest of the world at the beginning of World War I. What contemporary issue might Nunez be exploring through his poem? What message do you think he is trying to communicate about this issue?
5. Play the video of the [US-Mexico Border Fence](#). Ask students if they know what wall is depicted in the footage. If students do not know, tell them that it is a section of the border fence that separates the U.S. and Mexico. Point out that this is most likely the “huge wall” that Nunez writes about in his poem. Ask students what they know about the wall. Share some of the following facts with them:
 - In 2006 Congress passed the Secure Fence Act, which authorized nearly \$3 billion for 670 miles of fencing stretching from California to Texas, as well as lights, sensors and cameras.
 - The fence is actually several separation barriers designed to prevent illegal movement across the U.S.-Mexico border.
 - The barrier is located on both uninhabited and urban (e.g., San Diego, El Paso) sections of the border.
 - As of 2016, the border between the United States and Mexico has been built to stretch 1,954 miles of fence from the Gulf of Mexico to the Pacific Ocean.
 - According to the Congressional Research Service, the cost of building and maintaining the border fence could be as much as \$49 billion over the expected 25-year life span of the fence.

NOTE: If it is not possible to play the video in class, display or pass around a still photo of the U.S.-Mexico Border Fence; photos are readily available on the Internet.

6. Ask students to reflect on the discussion they had earlier about the two poems and the nature of walls, and to consider whether or not they think the border fence is an effective response to the issue of illegal immigration.
7. Post the chart paper entitled *700-Mile Border Fence Between the United States and Mexico*. Distribute the [handout](#) with the same title and a blank strip of chart paper to each student. Explain that the handout is a blog post taken from the Web site, <http://www.activoteamerica.com>. Direct students to read the blog and then to add their own “Reader Comment” by writing their opinion on the blank strip of paper. Allow about 10 minutes for students to respond and invite them to tape their strips to the master chart as they finish writing.
8. When all of the comments have been posted, ask for several volunteers to read their opinions aloud and lead a class discussion about their responses.
9. For homework, assign students to write a brief essay in response to the quote on the handout, *Walls or Barriers?* Have students read aloud their essays in class as time allows, and discuss the ways in which the U.S.-Mexico border fence creates not just a physical barrier, but also relational barriers between Mexican and U.S. citizens, immigrants and native born residents of the U.S. and other groups of people.

Part II: Analyzing Media for Anti-Immigrant Language and Themes (60–90 minutes)

1. Remind students of the earlier discussion about the ways in which the border fence creates a divide between immigrants and native born residents of the U.S. Ask students for examples of other, non-physical, barriers that may deepen this divide (e.g., laws, policies, prejudices, segregation in housing and schools, language differences, etc.).
2. If students don’t bring it up, ask them how the language we use to discuss immigration and immigrants can create a barrier—or an invisible wall—that promotes distrust of and even prejudice against immigrants.
3. As an example, read the quote below aloud. Tell students that it is from a book by Pat Buchanan, a conservative politician and columnist, who has run for president, written bestselling books and appears regularly on mainstream news programs. Ask students to think about how Buchanan’s language may deepen the divide discussed above.

“Unlike the Ellis Island generations, all of whom came from Europe, those pouring in today come from countries, continents, and cultures whose peoples have never before been assimilated by a First World nation. And they are coming in far greater numbers than any nation has ever absorbed. History has never seen an invasion like this. For there are more illegal aliens in the United States today than all the Irish, Jews and English who ever came, and the total number of immigrants here now almost equals the total number who came in the 350 years from the birth of Jamestown to the inauguration of JFK.”

— From Patrick J. Buchanan, *Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are Tearing America Apart*. (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2007): 9.

4. Ask students to share their reactions to the quote and chart their responses. You may want to highlight one or more of the following ideas:
 - The quote makes a distinction between immigrants from Europe and those from non-“First World nations,” and suggests that the latter may not be able to fit in here.
 - The quote describes immigration as an “invasion” and implies that the U.S. is under attack.
 - The quote characterizes some immigrants as “illegal”—and thereby illegitimate—rather than people in search of a better life.
 - The quote conveys panic about the number of immigrants in the U.S. and insinuates that this swelling population will bring ruin to the U.S.
5. Point out to students that the debate over immigration in the U.S. has created ways of talking about and framing the issue that often dehumanize the people whose lives and fates we are debating; and that this language sometimes promotes

stereotypes and prejudices against immigrants and those perceived to be “foreign.” Add that no matter what our beliefs are about specific policy issues, it is never acceptable to talk about human beings in stereotypical or demeaning ways.

NOTE: The handout, [Myths and Facts about Immigrants and Immigration](#), can be used as a reference during this part of the lesson to help students distinguish legitimate information from stereotypes and hyperbole.

6. Tell students that they are going to spend some time analyzing articles, book excerpts, ads and other mainstream examples of commentary on the issue of immigration. Explain that the task will be for students to identify the types of language used to frame the issue, and to think about how it may promote stereotypes, bias and unnecessary fear. Use one or both of the following options to set the stage for students:
 - Show the video [Codewords of Hate](#): This 7-minute video, produced by the National Council of La Raza, features an ADL Government and National Affairs representative discussing how some commentators fuel the scapegoating and demonizing of immigrants as part of the national debate over immigration reform. It offers four broad themes, and clips from a variety of news programs that demonstrate these themes.
 - Read the handout [You've Been Framed!](#): Distribute a copy of the handout to each student. Read individually or together as a class, this adaptation of an article by two University of California, Berkeley linguistics professors that looks at the problematic ways in which the immigration debate has been framed by politicians and the media. It discusses five frames that contribute to anti-immigrant bias.
7. After providing the background above, divide the class into small groups of 3–5 students and have each group select a recorder and a reporter. Provide each group with the handout [Media Analysis: The Framing of Immigration](#) and content from [Immigration in the Media: Sample Commentary](#). (If possible, provide each group with one commentary from each of the three categories—Articles/Book Excerpts, Print Ads and Public Service Announcements; if this is too much for your students to manage, limit analysis to just one or two pieces of content.)
8. Tell groups to read/view/listen to and discuss the sample commentaries together, using the questions on the [Media Analysis](#) handout as a guide. Instruct the recorders to take notes on the handout, and tell the reporters to be prepared to share back a few main points to the whole class. Allow about 20 minutes for groups to complete this task.
9. Reconvene the class and have each group’s reporter briefly share two or three key findings from their investigation. After all groups have shared, lead a class discussion using some of the following questions:
 - What themes or patterns did you notice across these commentaries?
 - When did it seem as though reasonable criticisms crossed the line to become unfair or extreme?
 - In what ways is language used in the media to create a barrier or divide among different groups of people?
 - How does this language lead to stereotypes and prejudice? What are other consequences of this type of language?
 - How can you protect yourself from the influences of extreme language, and how should you respond when you hear it?

Part III: Understanding the Repercussions of Anti-Immigrant Bias and Taking Action Against It (30–45 minutes plus time for action projects)

1. Ask students why they should be concerned about anti-immigrant language and bias in the media. Ask what the consequences are of this type of discourse, and how it relates to them and to their communities.
2. Distribute the [Excerpt from “Who is to Blame for Marcelo Lucero’s Murder?”](#) handout to each student. Ask for volunteers to read each paragraph aloud or have students read the article silently to themselves. Discuss some of the following questions:
 - What feelings or reactions came up for you as you listened to/read this article?
 - What do you think motivated the teenage boys to “find a Mexican” to beat up?
 - What is a scapegoat? Do you think Marcelo Lucero was a scapegoat? If so, what factors do you think triggered the teens to target him?
 - What is xenophobia? How does it relate to what happened to Marcelo, and to the issue of immigration in general?
 - What is the connection between this hate crime and the way immigration is talked about by politicians and in the media?

- What is the connection between this hate crime and recent laws that criminalize immigration and immigrants?
3. Comment that incidents like the murder of Marcelo Lucero can leave us feeling angry and helpless. Repeat the following line from the article:

We must all own our part in this crime ... We can legislate and educate the hate away.

Ask students what ordinary community members can do if they feel outraged about anti-immigrant prejudice and discrimination. Chart their ideas (e.g., get informed/educated about the issues, don't laugh at anti-immigrant jokes, join groups that promote acceptance of others, befriend/support immigrants who are new to the community, challenge unjust laws, etc.).

4. Suggest that one way to get involved is to challenge unfair laws and support good ones. Point out that the author of the article discusses whether "elected officials, through legislation and rhetoric, have created a xenophobic climate that breeds hate crimes." Ask students if they are aware of any laws related to immigration, and what community members can do to challenge or support a law. Add their ideas to the chart.
5. Have students conduct research on immigration legislative efforts. They can either investigate past federal efforts on immigration (e.g. Comprehensive Immigration Reform, DREAM Act) or can research whether their state has adopted any number of policies about immigrants (e.g. in-state tuition for undocumented students, driver's licenses for undocumented immigrants, policies that local police will not get involved with federal immigration enforcement). You can also have students learn about comments that their state's Governor has made about refugees. Work with students to implement one or more of their ideas and engage them in advocacy activities around the issue such as: writing letters to local representatives, circulating petitions, organizing a rally or informational event, writing an editorial, or developing a social media campaign to raise awareness.

Mending Wall

By Robert Frost (1874–1963)



Stone wall at Frost's farm in Derry, New Hampshire, which he describes in "Mending Wall." Photo by Craig Michaud / [CC BY 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/).

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbor know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of outdoor game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:
He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbors? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offense.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,

Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
 He will not go behind his father's saying,
 And he likes having thought of it so well
 He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbors.'

Poem from Robert Frost, *The Poetry of Robert Frost: The Collected Poems, Complete and Unabridged*, ed. Edward C. Lathem (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1979), 33.

Questions for Discussion/Writing

1. What does the narrator mean by, "Something there is that doesn't love a wall"? How does the meaning of this phrase change when it is repeated during the last part of the poem?
2. Why is there a wall separating the neighbors' properties? Why do they repair it each spring?
3. What does the narrator mean when he says, "Oh just another kind of out-door game"? Does he think the wall is necessary? What does his neighbor think?
4. The narrator says, "Before I built a wall I'd ask to know / What I was walling in or walling out, / And to whom I was like to give offence." Do you think the builders of the wall thought about these questions? Why or why not?
5. What does the narrator mean when he describes his neighbor as "an old-stone savage armed," who "moves in darkness" and "will not go behind his father's saying"?
6. The neighbor in the poem asserts that "Good fences make good neighbors." What do you think makes a better neighbor, good boundaries or good communication? Why?
7. The wall in the poem is a stone fence between two pieces of property. What other kinds of walls, literal and metaphorical, might this wall be a symbol for?
8. What does the poem suggest about the nature of walls?
9. When have you felt "walled in" or "walled out" in your own life? What caused you to feel this way?

Topics for Further Study/Writing

1. Research a well-known wall in history (e.g., Berlin Wall, Israel/Palestine Security Barrier, Great Wall of China, Hadrian's Wall, Maginot Line, U.S.-Mexico Border Fence). Write a brief essay answering the following questions: Did this wall make for "good neighbors"? What did the wall accomplish? What problems did it create?
2. Write a poem about a barrier that separates one human being from another.
3. Write a dialogue between two people on different sides of the U.S.-Mexico Border Fence that addresses the themes in *Mending Wall* and that explores the tensions that exist around immigration in our society.

A Voice from the Border

By Jorge Nunez



I stand on an unknown shore,
 It seems as I wash upon it.
 My mind is blurred, I really don't recall what happened.
 Maybe a shipwreck, where I might have fell overboard,
 I stand here on this strange shore.
 It seems out of this world that a huge wall would be
 Running as far as my eyes could see onto the land
 And straight into the ocean water.
 It's a strange place, and for a second I think I'm no longer
 on earth.
 A woman's voice tells me your family your kids
 And your mother
 Can come up to this wall to see you,
 But you can't cross over.
 My thoughts are confused,
 My heart is pounding, I suggest to this woman
 I just want to step on this side for a second.
 She tells me I can't
 They'll call you an alien.
 It feels like I'm dreaming,
 I sit on the sand, my head hanging I look up and stare into
 the sunset
 And try to remember how I got on this side of the wall
 On to this strange soil.

Poem © Jorge Nunez/Youth Radio, <https://youthradio.org/>.

Questions for Discussion/Writing

1. Where do you think the "strange shore" that the narrator washed up onto might be located? How do you think he got there?
2. What do you think the huge wall is that stretches before the narrator?
3. What feeling does the scene evoke? Why do you think the narrator feels that he is "no longer on earth"?
4. Why do you think the narrator is forbidden to cross over the wall, even though his family is on the other side?
5. What explanation does the woman give for this prohibition? Who or what do you think the woman represents?
6. What do you think the wall symbolizes, both literally and figuratively?

700-Mile Border Fence between the United States and Mexico Blog



In an effort to stem the tide of illegal immigration coming up from Mexico, the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives passed the "Secure Fence Act of 2006," which was signed by President Bush. The bill calls for the construction of about 700 miles of fencing along the Mexico-U.S. border. There are already several walls or fences between the two countries, most notably in highly populated areas. However, opponents argue the proposed wall would harm environmentally sensitive areas, hurt the economies of border towns, and is not worth the cost.

Reader Comments:

Build it and they will NOT come.

...

I agree that we need controls. I don't think the fence will completely stop the problem but it will slow it down and allow the border patrol agents some relief. The bill has passed, the money allocated, why hasn't it been implemented?

...

Hey America, let's start curing the PROBLEMS that lie behind the issues, instead of just trying to cure the symptoms. Fences, no matter how big or large won't stop it, bodies of water won't stop it, guns won't even stop it. So WHY is that? Hmm...

...

It's kind of a form of flattery. If I was right next to the Land of Opportunity, I'd want in too. If these immigrants can become law-abiding, tax-paying citizens, then why not? Or if you don't go for that, let's pressure Cuba and Mexico to create more jobs and demand better living conditions in both countries and bring the land of opportunity to them.

...

Go hang out at The Athens Regional emergency room for a few hours any day of the week and ask yourself, "how long can we absorb illegal immigrants before our infrastructure collapses?"

...

America was not founded on the principle of "let's give everyone opportunity, then when someone actually succeeds immediately take everything they have earned and give it to illegals and lazy people." Funny, I don't remember that part in Social Studies.

...

In South Texas during the last 6 weeks they have picked up 18 Africans (from Ethiopia and Eritrea) and 26 Chinese illegal immigrants. They are not just coming from Mexico and Central America. At one time I was not in favor of the wall since it would cut through the campus of the University of Texas at Brownsville, TX. It will also cut the Sabal Palms Wildlife Sanctuary and many homes will be behind the wall. I am concerned about the locked gates and access for emergency vehicles will be limited, but the number of immigrants coming is ridiculous. They have caught over 47,000 since October 2007 and I would remind you that this number was given by the Border Patrol for the lower Rio Grande Valley. This includes only Cameron, Hidalgo, and Starr Counties. Enough is enough.

Blog retrieved April 20, 2009, from <http://savannah.activote.com/issues/border-fence-between-united-states-and-mexico>.

Walls or Barriers?

Instructions: Write a brief essay in response to the quote below, in which a Massachusetts Institute of Technology professor of linguistics comments on the U.S. – Mexico Border Fence. Your essay should address some of the questions that follow the quote.



...Too often what nations build are not walls but barriers. They keep out the unwanted. They keep in the unwilling. In his poem, Robert Frost sees the wall as a barrier that keeps him and his neighbor strangers. Frost's neighbor, the farmer, sees it as useful, an amenity between them invoking distance and ensuring civility, or at least lack of the complications that attend human interaction. I suppose it really comes down to this: Do we build barriers or do we build walls? Do we keep our neighbors at arm's length or do we keep the door open for a visit? In other words, it's either the farmer's view—"Good fences make good neighbors"—or it's the poet's—"Something there is that doesn't love a wall."¹

- How does Frost's poem relate to the debate over the U.S. – Mexico Border Fence?
- Who are the "unwanted" and the "unwilling" that Keyser describes?
- Do you subscribe to the "farmer's view" or the "poet's view"?
- Do you see the fence as a way to achieve, or a barrier to, safety and security?
- What other types of barriers—besides the physical one—does the border fence create?

¹ Keyser, Jay. 2006. The Xenophobic School: Misreading Poetry. All Things Considered (May 23, 2006). [You can listen to this interview at <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5426125>.]

You've Been Framed!

Imagine you are looking out of your bedroom window at the house across the street. Through a narrow gap in the curtains, you see a masked figure pointing a gun. Alarmed, you reach for the phone and dial 911. At that moment, someone in the house pulls back the curtains completely and you see a room full of people in colorful outfits, enjoying themselves at what you now recognize to be a costume party.

The way in which the curtains framed the scene above shaped the way in which you perceived it. Similarly, the ways in which language is used to frame issues in our society influence how we understand those matters and what we believe are the best ways to address them.

The immigration debate in our society has been framed, or defined, in specific ways by politicians, journalists, activists, pundits and the media at large. The particular language and frames they use affect our attitudes and beliefs about immigration and immigrants, whether or not we are aware of their impact.

“Immigration reform,” for example, is a widely used term that is the very basis of discussion about immigration in the U.S. It is a term that is taken for granted, yet limits the conversation about immigration from the start. It suggests there is a pressing problem that needs to be fixed, and that the problem lies with immigrants themselves or with the agencies that oversee immigration law. There are many different frames that could be used to define the issue, but most are not a regular part of mainstream discussion. For example:

- The “foreign policy reform” or “globalization” frame, which would suggest that the ways in which the U.S. interacts with other countries contribute to world poverty and mass immigration;
- The “humanitarian crisis” or “economic refugee” frame, which would focus efforts on helping people who have fled poverty and terrible living conditions elsewhere rather than trying to keep them out;
- The “civil rights” frame, which would focus attention on the denial of basic protections and services to millions of people who work and pay taxes here; and
- The “cheap labor” or “cheap lifestyle” frame, which would bring attention to the employers who pay low wages and the consumers who buy their goods, thereby attracting laborers from other countries who are desperate for work.

None of these frames are neutral. They each reflect certain assumptions and beliefs. When reading or listening to others talk about immigration, it is important to be aware of the frames they have adopted and the language they use to advance those frames. This will help you to understand what viewpoints and biases they bring to the discussion, and to think beyond the limitations of one particular set of ideas, especially when those ideas promote stereotypes or intolerance.

The following are some common frames used to discuss immigration that may contribute to anti-immigrant prejudice and irrational fear about immigration.

The Illegal Frame: People often refer to “illegal immigrants” or “illegals” as if it were a neutral term, but this way of describing immigrants defines them as criminals, as if they are by nature bad people. Defining immigrants as lawbreakers overlooks the positive contributions they make to the U.S.—for example, by working hard for low wages—and suggests that they deserve to be locked up or punished in some way. Immigrants who cross into the U.S. outside of legal channels, though, are generally not dangerous criminals whose intent is to cause harm. Most immigrants are in search of honest work and a better life, and the “illegal” frame exaggerates the seriousness of their offense. It also ignores the unlawful acts of employers. Have you ever heard someone who has hired an undocumented worker referred to as an “illegal employer”?

The Alien Frame: The term “illegal alien” not only emphasizes criminality, but also otherness. “Aliens” suggests nonhuman beings invading from outer space—completely foreign, not one of us, intent on taking over our land and our way of life. Along these lines, the word “invasion” is often used to discuss the wave of people crossing the border. The “alien” frame dehumanizes immigrants and limits our ability to recognize the commonalities we all share—the desire for a secure job, a safe home and a better future for our families. The U.S. prides itself on being a “nation of immigrants.” What message does it send when we set some of those immigrants apart as “alien”?

The Security Frame: Immigration is commonly talked about as a “security problem” or a “threat to national security.” If one believes that immigrants are criminals and invaders, it is a logical response to demand that the government protect its citizens from the danger they represent. Congress, in fact, has linked border security with Mexico to the larger “war on terror,” and has

spent billions of dollars to place National Guard troops on the border and to construct a 670-mile border fence stretching from California to Texas. Most immigrants, of course, are not terrorists and pose no physical threat. They don't want to shoot us or kill us or blow us up. They only want to share the opportunity of pursuing the American Dream.

The Amnesty Frame: Much of the immigration debate centers on whether or not those who have entered the U.S. outside of legal channels should be given "amnesty," or pardoned for their illegal actions. Like the "illegal" frame, the discussion about amnesty implies that the fault lies with immigrants and that it would be merciful for the government to forgive their wrongdoings. This viewpoint overlooks the role of businesses that have knowingly hired undocumented workers and the government officials who have looked the other way. No one talks about granting amnesty to these parties because the issue has been framed as an "immigrant problem."

The Worker Frame: "Undocumented worker," "temporary worker" and "guest worker" are terms that have been widely used to describe the status of immigrants. While these descriptions are more respectful than "illegal" or "alien," there are some limitations to the "worker" frame. "Worker" suggests that immigrants' only function in the U.S. is to labor, not to be educated, have families, form communities, vote and have complete lives. Some "temporary worker" plans allow for only short-term stays in the U.S. with few or no benefits or rights. This narrow way of defining people is undemocratic and treats immigrants as second-class citizens who are separate and apart from the rest of society.

Adapted with permission from Lakoff, George and Ferguson, Sam. 2006. The Framing of Immigration. The Rockridge Institute, <http://www.rockridgeinstitute.org/research/rockridge/immigration>.

Media Analysis: The Framing of Immigration

1. What frames or themes are used to define the issue and set the boundaries for discussion? Do you agree with these frames? Why or why not?

2. What specific language is used to advance the frames or themes presented? Do you think this language is fair or problematic? Explain.

3. Are the opinions expressed supported by rational facts or do they seem unreasonable/unfounded? If you are not sure, what can you do to investigate further?

4. Are criticisms limited to specific policies or events, or are generalizations made that may not apply across the board?

5. Does the piece promote stereotypes, prejudices or unnecessary fear? Explain.

Immigration in the Media: Sample Commentary

Articles/Book Excerpts

[Note: The following excerpts are provided herein which can also be accessed by clicking on the title.]

- Buchanan, Patrick J. *Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are Tearing America Apart*, 10-11. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007.
- Buchanan, Patrick J. *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization*, 2-3 and 133-134. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002.
- Dobbs, Lou. *Independents Day: Awakening the American Spirit*, 162-163. New York: The Penguin Group, 2007.
- Letiecq, Greg. [Statement to the PWBOCS](#) [Prince William Board of County Supervisors]. *The Front Line* 1, No. 1 (September 2007): 2. www.helpsavemanassas.org/files/newsletter/HSMNewsletter0907.pdf.
- Tancredo, Tom. *In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security*, 108-109. Nashville: Cumberland House Publishing, Inc., 2006.

Print Ads

- "[Americans may eventually find a way to live without oil. Water is another story.](#)" (Ad paid for by America's Leadership Team for Long Range Population-Immigration-Resource Planning)
- "[Amnesty for illegal workers is not just a slap in the face to black Americans. It's an economic disaster.](#)" (Ad paid for by Coalition for the New American Worker)
- "[Mass Immigration and Global Warming: Gives the Term Melting Pot a Whole New Meaning.](#)" (Ad paid for by Coalition for Sensible Immigration Policy)
- "[Not all foreign tourists want to see the Grand Canyon.](#)" (Ad paid for by Californians for Population Stabilization)
- "[20 Million Americans are unemployed. And it's not due to a lack of jobs.](#)" (Ad paid for by Californians Population Stabilization)
- If Americans are having fewer children, why is California so crowded? (Ad paid for by Californians Population Stabilization)

Public Service Announcements

[Visit www.americanworker.org and www.capsweb.org to listen to the following ads and others that are available.*]

Television Ads

- Jobs for Americans Should be President Obama's Priority (American Worker)
- It's Time to Protect Americans (American Worker)
- Coalition for the Future American Worker Ad (American Worker)
- Anchor Babies TV Ads (CAPS)
- Save Our States (CAPS)
- CAP's 'Children Ad' (CAPS)
- Sanctuary City Television Ad (CAPS)

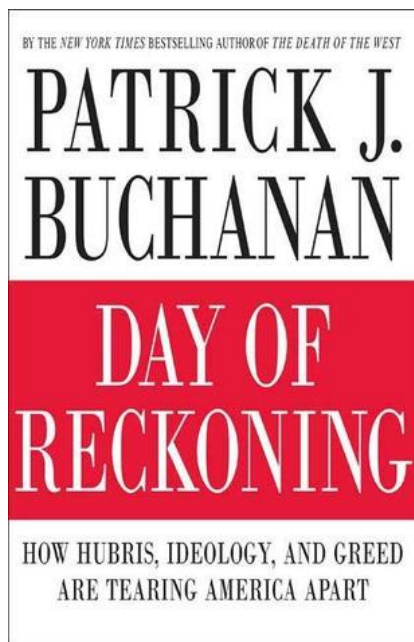
Radio Ads (CAPS)

- CAPS 2016 'Children' Ad
- American Workers Deserve Day of Respect, Not Illegal Aliens
- Inconvenient Truth

*You can find out more about some of the groups behind these ads in the ADL report, *Immigrants Targeted: Extremist Rhetoric Moves into the Mainstream*, at http://www.adl.org/civil_rights/anti_immigrant.

Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are Tearing America Apart

Book excerpt from Patrick J. Buchanan, *Day of Reckoning: How Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are Tearing America Apart* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007), 10-11.



As critical, the greatest cohort of immigrants here today, legal and illegal, is from Mexico. One in five Mexicans is already here. But unlike the immigrants of old, Mexicans bear an ancient grudge against us as the country that robbed Mexico of half her land when both nations were young. By one survey, 72 percent of Mexicans look on Americans as “racists.” By another, 58 percent of Mexicans believe the American Southwest belongs to them.

At the Guadalajara soccer game where Mexico played the United States for the right to compete in the 2004 Olympics, each Mexican score was greeted with chants of “Osama! Osama!” During the Miss World contest in Mexico City in 2007, Miss USA’s every appearance was hooted and jeered.

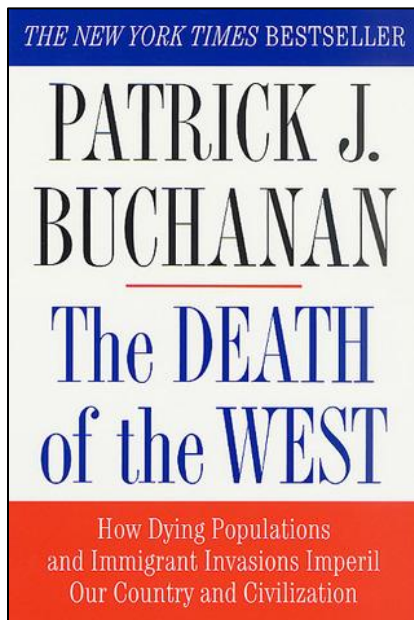
By 2050, more than 100 million Hispanics will be in the United States, concentrated in a Southwest that borders on Mexico. As the Serbs are losing Kosovo, so we may have lost the Southwest.

Why did America not secure her borders, enforce her laws, repel the invasion, expel the intruders? Because our leaders are terrified of charges of racism and lack moral courage, and because the United States has ceased to be a democratic republic. The will of the majority is no longer reflected in public policy. State and local referenda to deal with the illegal alien crisis are routinely invalidated by federal judges, as immigration laws go unenforced by federal officials.

Perhaps the greatest threat to the survival of this nation as a sovereign and independent republic comes from transnational elites who seek to erase our borders and merge America, Mexico and Canada into a North American Union—the penultimate step toward a World Federation of Nations and Peoples. There, as Talbott rhapsodized, “nationhood as we know it will be obsolete; all states will recognize a single, global authority, and the phrase ‘citizen of the world’ will have assumed real meaning.” This is the nonviolent path to national suicide America is now on.

The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization

Book excerpt from Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West: How Dying Populations and Immigrant Invasions Imperil Our Country and Civilization* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002), 2-3 and 133-134.



In late 1999, this writer left Tucson and drove southeast to Douglas, the Arizona border town of eighteen thousand that had become the principal invasion corridor into the United States. In March alone, the U.S. Border Patrol had apprehended twenty-seven thousand Mexicans crossing illegally, half again as many illegal aliens crossing in one month as there are people in Douglas.

While there, I visited Theresa Murray, an eighty-two-year-old widow and a great-grandmother who lives in the Arizona desert she grew up in. Her ranch house was surrounded by a seven-foot chain link fence that was topped with coils of razor wire. Every door and window had bars on it and was wired to an alarm. Mrs. Murray sleeps with a .32-caliber pistol on her bed table, because she has been burglarized thirty times. Her guard dogs are dead; they bled to death when someone tossed meat containing chopped glass over the fence.

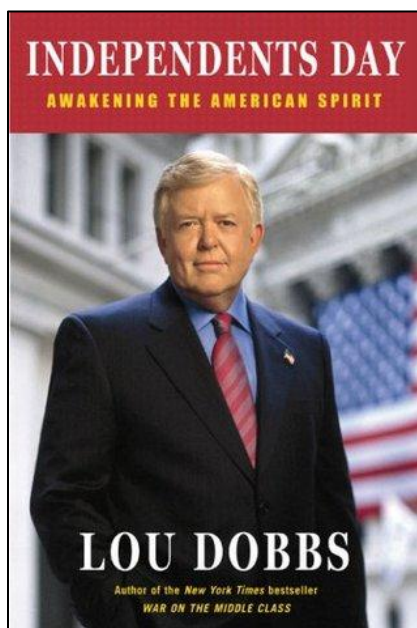
Theresa Murray is living out her life inside a maximum-security prison, in her own home, in her own country, because her government lacks the moral courage to do its duty and defend the borders of the United States of America.

If America is about anything, it is freedom. But as Theresa Murray says, "I've lost my freedom. I can't ever leave the house unless I have somebody watch it. We used to ride our horses clear across the border. We had Mexicans working on our property. It used to be fun to live here. Now, it's hell. It's plain old hell."

While Theresa Murray lives unfree, in hellish existence, American soldiers defend the borders of Korea, Kuwait, and Kosovo. But nothing is at risk on those borders, half a world away, to compare with what is at risk on our border with Mexico, over which pass the armies of the night as they trudge endlessly northward to the great cities of America. Invading armies go home, immigrant armies do not.

Independents Day: Awakening the American Spirit

Book excerpt from Lou Dobbs, *Independents Day: Awakening the American Spirit* (New York: The Penguin Group, 2007), 162-163.



Illegal immigration has, in fact, the potential to change the course of American history. Demographers at the Brookings Institution and the Population Reference Bureau paint a troubling picture of the future of our democracy. As more illegal aliens cross our borders and settle in large states like California, Texas and Florida, congressional seats will be redistributed to these bigger states following each decennial census. States with low levels of immigration will ultimately lose seats as a result. Unfortunately for American citizens, this seismic shift in political representation will be decided by noncitizens who cannot vote.

There's no question that this type of mass immigration would have a calamitous effect on working citizens and their families. Carol Swain, professor of law and political science at Vanderbilt University and author of *Debating Immigration*, would like to see more people speak up for the sectors of society most affected by illegal immigration.

When I talked to her on the show, she asked, "How many African American leaders have you seen come out and address the impact that high levels of illegal immigration (are) having in the communities when it comes to jobs, when it comes to education, when it comes to health care? And often, these low-skilled, low-wage workers compete in the same sectors for jobs."

President Bush's repeated exhortations that "the American people" need to get behind his plan reveal, on some level, his awareness that the American public is united against his legislation. Yet his rhetoric, and that of so many of our country's elites, makes it sound as if the working people of this nation are in conflict with one another over this issue. President Bush states that "America should not fear diversity." These are words of neither a leader nor a uniter. Senate majority leader Harry Reid referred to an amendment to make English the official language of the country as an act of prejudice, stating bluntly that "this amendment is racist." Even though 84 percent of all Americans and 71 percent of Hispanics say that English should be the official language of government operations, Reid used his position to make a divisive statement. Nonsense like this from national leaders is unworthy of their offices and fails to elevate the American spirit.

Statement to the PWBOCS

Article excerpt from Greg Letiecq, Statement to the PWBOCS [Prince William Board of County Supervisors], *The Front Line* 1, No. 1 (September 2007): 2.

Our country has been under assault from the influx of tens, if not hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens who have taken advantage of our lax enforcement of the law at the federal, state and local levels. These border crashers have contributed to rising crime rates, increasing burdens on our schools, hospitals and public services, and the very destruction of our American Culture. Prince William County is not the place it used to be, and as a result many of our productive citizens are leaving.

All of this is for the purpose of turning our citizens into the unwitting objects of a real-time social experiment in multi-cultural, diversity-worshipping social justice. They are told that to object to their involuntary participation in this replacement of our American culture would be nativist, racist or xenophobic. That they must, as good little cogs in the grand wheel of this experiment, be compassionate towards the eighteen men who have rammed themselves into the house next door, because they're hard workers. They must cheerfully turn over increasing portions of their wealth to lighten the burdens on these uninvited and unwelcome lawbreakers so that the children of illegal aliens can obtain free health care, free educations, and free food. Citizens are reminded that it would have chilling effects, or heaven forbid, create fear among the illegal aliens if they understood that the law would actually apply to them. The citizens must, in their role as involuntary guinea pigs, be meekly tolerant of their designated role in this grand experiment.

No more.

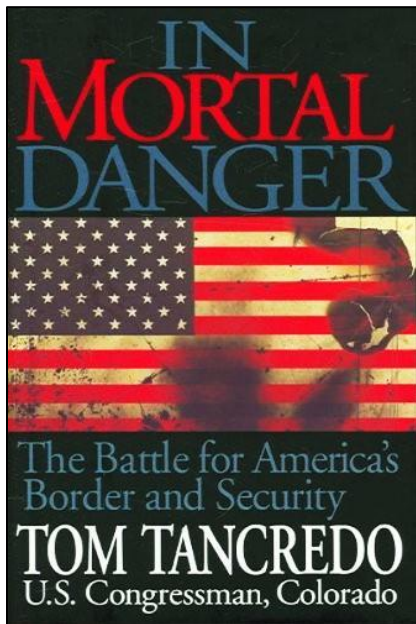
No more tolerance for criminal illegal aliens who commit assault and battery, stalking indecent exposure, driving while intoxicated or hit and run because these crimes aren't supposedly serious enough to warrant even notifying immigration authorities. No more protection for illegal aliens who attempt to obtain taxpayer-funded services which they are not entitled to receive in order to make their continued unlawful presence in the country more comfortable. No more selective enforcement of our laws in order to make it easier for vast numbers of illegal aliens to remain in our midst only to demand that we accommodate their deficient grasp of the English language and change our laws to suit their interests at the expense of the American citizens.

Supervisor Stirrup's proposed resolution helps to dismantle this unconscionable social experiment at the local level. If it is enacted, the safe haven which county policies have previously created will no longer exist. It does so not by changing who receives benefits, or what is or is not lawful, but by putting an end to this malfeasance in which the citizens of the county are not just unwitting test subjects, but victims.

With passage of this resolution, the citizens will regain their rightful place as the masters of their government, rather than its subjects. We urge all of the supervisors to vote in favor of this long overdue proposal.

In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security

Book excerpt from Tom Tancredo, *In Mortal Danger: The Battle for America's Border and Security*, (Nashville: Cumberland House Publishing, Inc., 2006), 108-109.



What Americans must understand is that while we have always had illegal immigrants and illegal immigration, the dynamics of our border problems are changing—for the worse. Today, it is no longer a few people coming across the border looking for jobs. It is now a very well-organized effort conducted largely by people who have heretofore been involved with drug smuggling. Because people smuggling has become very lucrative, drug cartels have become more interested. They are paid between a thousand to fifteen hundred dollars to get a Mexican national into the United States; costs for a Middle Easterner or an Asian rise to about fifty thousand dollars.

Over the course of my legislative career I have tried to deal with the issue of immigration reform in a variety of contexts. I've talked about the problems associated with porous borders and what they mean to the future and security of the United States. I've talked about the economic impact of the massive immigration of low-skilled, low-wage workers. I've talked about the environmental damage.

By the year 2050, if we do absolutely nothing and things continue as they are today, the U.S. population will reach some 420 million people, with a vast majority coming from non-English-speaking nations.

I come from Colorado, and things have changed pretty dramatically in my state over the last several years. The increase in Colorado's population has already been

substantial. As such, the infrastructure costs that go along with massive increases in people are, of course, prevalent, and the taxpayers of my state are payment them for.

But this kind of growth is happening across the country. Soon, if immigrant growth rates persist, it will be much more difficult to get through congested highways, to visit our national parks, to experience the pristine wilderness that we have all enjoyed, and to provide benefits for millions and millions of new arrivals. I can't begin to estimate what that will cost us.

The sheer number of immigrants is something far greater than anything we have ever experienced in this nation. It is far greater than what we experienced in the 1900s when my grandparents came here.

After I've spoken about our porous borders on the floor of the House—which I try to do as often as I can – the e-mails, telephone messages and letters start all over again. There is such an outpouring of emotion from Americans on this issue. They, too, feel it is vital that we do something about our borders.

Most of the feedback comes from Americans who are watching their lives and livelihoods disrupted. They often ask the Congress to do something about this illegal immigration problem. Speaking for myself, I am overwhelmed by these cries for help. And I know my colleagues care about this issue. But I don't see that care being translated into any sort of help for these Americans who put up with this hellish nightmare day in and day out. The Congress appears fearful of doing anything that would actually secure our borders, fearful of doing anything that would actually enforce the law in this country. Why? The fear stems from political reasons, and that disappoints me.

Excerpt from “Who is to Blame for Marcelo Lucero’s Murder?”

Elected officials in Suffolk County have created a xenophobic climate that breeds hate crimes.

By Marcelo Ballvé / New America Media, December 2, 2008

SMITHTOWN, N.Y. —Why here? That’s still the question on the minds of many residents of Long Island, the archetypal New York suburb, after the murder of Marcelo Lucero, a 37-year-old Ecuadorean immigrant who was stabbed to death after being attacked by seven teenagers on November 8th.

Lucero’s death was labeled a hate killing by local police, who said the teenagers, all locals, embarked on a beer-fueled rampage in search of “a Mexican” to beat up.

It was only the latest, and most serious, in a chain of attacks on Latino immigrants in Suffolk County. In 2000, two Mexican day laborers in Farmingville were picked up by men ostensibly offering them work and were nearly beaten to death with gardening tools. Three years later, local teenagers firebombed a home, and the immigrant family of five living in it barely escaped with their lives. Low-level harassment is even more common. Community leaders say Latinos are regularly taunted, spit upon and pelted with projectiles.

Local soul-searching over the crime has focused on whether local politicians are partly to blame for Lucero’s death. Immigrant advocates say elected officials, through legislation and rhetoric, have created a xenophobic climate that breeds hate crimes.

Suffolk County Executive Steve Levy and his allies in the local legislature have very publicly championed measures aimed at stemming illegal immigration. Levy has won some of these battles (requiring county contractors to check workers’ status, cracking down on landlords with overcrowded housing) but lost others, most notably an effort to deputize local law enforcement to nab illegal immigrants.

Meanwhile, Suffolk’s Latino population—a diverse mosaic of Salvadorans, Colombians, Dominicans, Ecuadoreans and Mexicans—has continued booming. Suffolk is 13 percent Latino, according to U.S. Census figures.

The contradictions of life in today’s Long Island were apparent recently at a county legislative session.

On the morning of Nov. 18...the legislators got an earful about their portion of responsibility in Lucero’s murder, which happened 10 days earlier.

Charlotte Koons of the Suffolk New York Civil Liberties Union was the first speaker. She read a poem about Lucero’s death, ending with this line: “We must all own our part in this crime ... We can legislate and educate the hate away.” Suffolk resident Andrea Callan, also with the NYCLU, blasted the lawmakers for setting a bad example. “The policies coming out of this legislative body, and no doubt from the playbook of Steve Levy, have been divisive and unfair, and send a message of intolerance into our community.”

Some in Suffolk may yearn for normality, but their county has forever become emblematic of a problem with national reach: the tension between the suburban myth of white-picket fences and orderly lawns and the realities of immigration. As job-seeking immigrants increasingly move from urban areas to outlying communities, suburbs must choose whether they will embrace diversity or scapegoat foreigners.

It’s no secret many Suffolk residents moved from more urbanized areas to put some distance between themselves and what they perceive as the chaotic diversity of New York City and its immediate surroundings, said Patrick Young, program director of the Central American Refugee Center (Carecen), who also spoke at the session. Suburbia’s irrational distrust and fear of minorities can manifest as anti-immigrant sentiment.

“It has become an acceptable part of the culture of this area, and this is a culture that’s pandered to by these politicians and stirred up by them,” he said.

But Levy denied there was a link between Lucero's death and his attitude toward illegal immigration. "Advocates for those here illegally should not disparage those opposed to the illegal immigration policy as being bigoted or intolerant," he said.

In the past, Levy has cited the dream of a suburban lifestyle to justify his beliefs on immigration. "People who play by the rules work hard to achieve the suburban dream of the white picket fence," he said in 2007 to The New York Times. "Whether you are black or white or Hispanic, if you live in the suburbs, you do not want to live across the street from a house where 60 men live. You do not want trucks riding up and down the block at 5 a.m., picking up workers." With such statements Levy is advancing a polarizing vision, said immigrant advocates.

It's the same rhetoric the teenagers who killed Lucero have been hearing since they were old enough to understand it, said Carcen's Young, who added, "this constant branding of people as illegal is the most dehumanizing thing."

At the street corner in the tidy, seaside village of Patchogue where Lucero died, an improvised shrine has been set up, with flowers, candles, and photos. A line of orange spray-paint left by police still marks the path the mortally wounded Lucero followed before falling. A sign written in black marker reads: "God Loves All People, and All People Should Love One Another."

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