



# IMMIGRANT CONNECTION

# WAYPOINTS

ALONG THE WELCOME JOURNEY



BEST PRACTICES LEARNED FROM PRACTITIONERS DURING THE IC WELCOME CALL

## IMMIGRATION 101 – CONFRONTING IMMIGRATION MYTHS WITH TRUTH

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A welcome call with Courtney Tudi (Immigration Attorney), Adam Estle (VP of Field and Constituencies, National Immigration Forum), and Zach Szmará (National Director, Immigrant Connection)

To watch the recording: <https://youtu.be/c5iTQccfud0>

### MYTH #1 – IMMIGRANTS AND “ILLEGALS” – ARE ALL OR MOST IMMIGRANTS ILLEGAL?

- It is true that the “act of crossing the border without proper documents” is unlawful
  - However just because someone has committed the *act* of a civil crime does not mean that they themselves *are* illegal
  - Anyone who has broken the speed limit has committed a similar crime crossing the border illegally, but when I’m speeding in my car, I’m not called an illegal.
  - Remember, it is unlawful for anyone to cross the border between ports of entry – that means it’s also illegal for someone from the US to cross the border illegally into Mexico. In fact, the number of people crossing from US to Mexico has outnumbered number of people crossing from Mexico to US.
- Understanding the immigrant population (foreign-born population) in the United States
  - Total 45 million immigrants/foreign-born
  - More than 22 million are U.S. Citizens (USC)
    - They have naturalized and have the same protections under the laws as someone born here.
    - Largest percent of immigrants are in this category!
  - More than 12 million are Lawful Permanent Resident (LPR) – sometimes to referred to as having a green card
    - Still have one more step to become a USC
  - Around 2 million are here with some temporary lawful status
    - Examples include: student visas, DACA, TPS, refugee status
  - Around 11 million are undocumented or unauthorized immigrants
    - They either crossed a border or overstayed a visa

### MYTH #2 – THE BORDER IS A PLACE OF DANGER TO BE FEARED BECAUSE IMMIGRANTS ARE CRIMINALS

- There is VIBRANCY provided by borders – trade, tourism, family communities.
- Still these communities want Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to keep out drugs and human trafficking, best place to do this is at ports of entry.
  - How do we enhance or develop ports of entry since that’s where a huge majority of drugs and human trafficking is coming from?
  - We need more and better technology at ports of entry – a wall isn’t the most effective.

### MYTH #3 – IMMIGRANTS STEAL JOBS AND BENEFITS; IMMIGRANTS ARE AN ECONOMIC BURDEN

- It’s true, immigrants do compete for jobs, but a vast majority of immigrants are competing for jobs on the lowest rung on the economic ladder
- Only 5,000 unskilled worker visas are allotted per year within the employment visa pathway
- Immigrants who are taking jobs at the lowest rung are providing jobs for those above them.
- Most undocumented immigrants pay taxes, and they don’t take public benefits as they are not eligible for them.

#### MYTH #4 – “THEY” JUST NEED TO IMMIGRATE THE ‘RIGHT WAY’

- It’s impossible for us to come the way our ancestors came because it doesn’t exist anymore. We have many more rules and regulations now than we did then.
  - It’s like a basketball coach giving baseball coach a hard time for not scoring 120 points – it’s a totally different game with different rules and outcomes...
- How it used to be at Ellis Island
  - If an immigrant came on a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> class ticket – they didn’t wait in line, we just figured they were fine.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> class ticket – there was more scrutiny to see if they would become a public charge
  - 98% of people who showed up at Ellis Island came into the United States and then they just had to stay here for 10 years to become a US Citizen.
- Historically through the present, there has always been a group of immigrants we didn’t want to come in
  - Examples include: the Chinese Exclusion Act, in 1924 when the quota system started (they used the 1890 census rather than 1920 census so that we didn’t let in more of the “bad” immigrants)
- What are the pathways to getting into the US now? 4 main pathways for an immigrant
  - Employment - Employer must show that they tried to fill the job by USC and need specific qualifications
    - Low-skilled workers – only 5,000 / High-skilled workers w/ extraordinary abilities - 140,000
  - Family - Most popular way to come
    - “Chain migration” is a misconception – it’s actually called family reunification in immigration law
    - Sometimes you can bring spouse, child, parent, or sibling depending on who you are.
      - The WAIT is very long depending on who you are and who you are bringing (2-50+ years)
      - Is very costly - \$2000 in government and attorney fees for one person
  - Diversity lottery – for underrepresented countries
  - Humanitarian - Asylum/ Refugee

#### MYTH #5 – ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS A MARRY A US CITIZEN

- There are now Bars of Re-Entry – if someone crossed a border illegally and has been here over a year illegally, they would trigger a bar and would have to wait outside the US for 10 years before they could come back.

#### MYTH #6 – THE MORE OUTSIDERS WE LET IN, THE MORE LIKELY WE WILL LOSE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE AN AMERICAN AND LOSE OUR AMERICAN VALUES AND IDEALS

- This concept shows a blindness to our national history; immigration (welcoming and including those outside) has been a part of the history since the beginning.
- Italians and Irish were immigrants that we historically tried to keep out yet these are people who have made America what it is today now and are considered a vital and essential part of American society.
- Especially as Christians, our allegiance should be first to the Kingdom of God.

#### MYTH #7 – IMMIGRATION REFORM IS SYNONOMOUS WITH AMNESTY

- We should be reminded that amnesty isn’t a “bad word”, its actually a huge part of our faith
- The reality is that most Americans want it easier for people to come legally and harder for people to come illegally
- One main push for comprehensive reform is based on the concept of restitution; giving undocumented immigrants an opportunity to get right with the law – creating a pathway where there is no pathway

#### ONE NEXT STEP

- Be in relationship – seek to meet those you don’t know. Be approachable. Be interruptible. Be like Jesus.
- Start with a Biblical approach first. We are called to love, to serve, and to welcome immigrants. They are the hope.
- Approach all conversations with grace.

#### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- <https://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/take-action/conversation-guide/>
- <https://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/proximity/>
- <https://evangelicalimmigrationtable.com/thinkingbiblically/>

To sign up for upcoming Immigrant Connection Welcome Calls: [www.icwelcome.org/call](http://www.icwelcome.org/call)