

Charles Goldstein | A Fourth of July for everyone

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This Fourth of July, America celebrates its 233rd birthday. Concurrent with the celebration, over 6,000 immigrants were naturalized as citizens in commemoration programs throughout the United States (including New Jersey's [Liberty Island](#) and Betsy Ross House in Pennsylvania).

Unfortunately, millions of American residents who are "yearning to breathe free," who work hard, pay taxes, and even some who protect and defend our republic in the military do not have a path to citizenship ... yet.



Lost amidst a variety of "stories" over the past weeks was news the President Barak Obama met on June 25 with bi-partisan group of leaders including Senators McCain, Schumer and Menendez to develop a plan for reforming our immigration system.

During the meeting, President Obama indicated in the clearest terms that he wanted a workable solution, based on reality, not rhetoric or xenophobia. The plan that emerges will probably disappoint ideologues, and must be based on the perspectives highlighted below.

There are three basic options for dealing with the broken immigration system, but only one will solve the problem: 1) Allow the current immigration mess to deteriorate further, a prospect that frustrates the vast majority the American people. 2) Hold out for the ugly fantasy that we are going to get rid of 12,000,000 undocumented immigrants, a prospect as unrealistic as it is un-American. 3) Move forward with a comprehensive plan that restores the rule of law, gets people in the system, makes employers play by the rules, and creates a stable, sustainable and legal system of immigration.

An American solution to our broken immigration system includes effective, humane border and interior enforcement that respects rights and keeps communities safe. Also there must be a way for those here without proper documentation to get in the system with legal status so they get on a path to citizenship, [learn English](#), and become fully integrated Americans. Family reunification has always been a hallmark of our immigration system. In 2007, part of the reason that the proposal for immigration reform failed was because it ignored family reunification as a historic component of any American immigration system.

Democrats were elected on a platform of tackling and solving big problems like immigration, healthcare, and reforming our economic system. If they don't pull together, act like a majority, and deliver on the promise of change, independents and swing voters will begin to look elsewhere, imperiling the majority they now enjoy. Republicans, seeking to regain majority status run the risk of further alienating the fastest group of new voters in the nation if they do not take a bipartisan approach to these great issues. There are many

Republicans members of the house and senate who have and continue to demonstrate support for comprehensive immigration reform that is fair, humane, and just, based on reality not xenophobia.

In every generation, our great American republic has been preserved and grown by embracing change – from the “Jacksonian Revolution” to the Civil War to the progressive movements’ response to inequality and oppression; from the Great Depression of the 1930s and the “New Deal” that preserved our Democracy by instituting crucial changes in labor relations, economic regulation, the institution of [social security](#) and massive public works programs. In our recent history, the civil rights movement of the 1960s addressed our nation’s ugly legacy of slavery and apartheid which grew out of the infamous Plessy vs. Ferguson decision. While civil rights was the focus in the 1960s, the positive parts of the Great Society in that era ALSO included the so-called “socialism” represented by Medicare and Medicaid. In 1965, we also significantly modified our immigration system (sound familiar?). We continue to pay the price for failure to enact comprehensive healthcare reform in the 1990s. Considering all these issues, we are in essence faced with a “perfect storm” that once again tests our commitment to “form a more perfect union.”

We are tested in battle against those who would destroy America from abroad and by xenophobic forces who seek to destroy America from within. Expanding our economic opportunities, democratizing our healthcare system and immigration reform, are all tests of our ability to grow as a democratic republic. Despite the great strides we have made in the area of civil rights, the specter of racism, sexism and other forms of discrimination still threaten our democracy.

Notwithstanding or because of all of these challenges, we have much to celebrate this July 4th because we as a nation of immigrants are always working “to form a more perfect union.”

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Comments

