

On June 16th, 2015, Mr. Donald Trump announced his candidacy with a derogatory speech against racial ethnic minorities: citizens, residents, and workers in the U.S., judging them as criminals and declaring them unwelcome. He said, "Mexico is not our friend... When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best . . . They're sending people that have a lot of problems, and they're bringing those problems... They're bringing drugs... they're bringing crime. They're rapists... . . .It's coming from all over South and Latin America, and it's coming probably... probably from the Middle East."¹ What is more shocking than the rhetoric coming from this presidential candidate is the reaction and cheers coming from the crowd. Trump seems to be tapping into a deep-seeded belief-system in the United States, and this became quite evident again in his recent national poll surge up to 41 percent, following his recommendation to ban Muslim entry into the U.S.² Geoff Garin, president of polling firm Hart Research, believes that Trump is tapping into a "segment of the Republican electorate... that is strongly anti-immigrant... [and another that is] ..anti-politician,"³ however, politicians have often used racist language to unify the masses by creating a common enemy.

Racialized politics can be traced throughout history and in North America, back to the early colonial period; by denigrating and dehumanizing the enemy, it becomes easier to justify fighting and killing them. British colonists in North America adopted a religious imperative to

¹ XpressNews, "Donald Trump Presidential speech announcement 2016 - Donald Trump Bashes Mexico Obamacare." YouTube video from a speech given by Donald Trump, posted on June 16, 2015, accessed December 14, 2015.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDRqzKOPSOM>

² "Trump hits a new high in national poll," Politico Event Web Page, <http://www.politico.com/story/2015/12/poll-trump-new-high-216741> [accessed December 14, 2015].

³ "Why is Donald Trump Polling So Well?," NationalJournal Web Page, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/daily/2015/07/01/why-is-donald-trump-polling-so-well> [accessed December 14,2015].

conquer Native Americans, while plantation owners used the Bible and popular science to justify the ownership of African American slaves. For the Republican Party, racial resentment became a clear strategy during Richard Nixon's presidential campaign. H.R. Haldeman, one of Nixon's key advisers, recalls that Nixon himself deliberately pursued a Southern, racial strategy: "He [President Nixon] emphasized that you have to face the fact that the whole problem is really the blacks. The key is to devise a system that recognizes this while not appearing to."⁴ Similarly, John Ehrlichman, special counsel to the president, explained the Nixon administration's campaign strategy of 1968 in this way: "We'll go after the racists."⁵ In Ehrlichman's view, "that subliminal appeal to the anti-black voter was always present in Nixon's statements and speeches."⁶ Similar to Trump's strategy, what is most shocking is the response. Nixon was able to win the Presidency by converting the Democratic South into the new form of racially polarized Republican South. Prior to that, "the North was overwhelming Republican and, while Republicans were ambivalent about equality for African Americans, they were far more inclined to adopt and implement racial justice reforms than their Democratic counterparts below the Mason-Dixon line."⁷ It is my opinion that this form of racialized politics harms society and works against the development of a just society by polarizing the masses and by influencing real policy.

One of the main focuses of politically guided racial resentment, over the last decade, has been directed towards Mexicans and Latin Americans. In order to critique Trump's racist

⁴ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow* (New York: The New Press, 2010), p.51.

⁵ Ibid., p. 52.

⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

⁷ Ibid., p. 43.

comments, first, unfortunately, his basic assumptions have to be addressed. Are Mexicans inherently more criminal? This question, in turn, leads one to ask, is any people group inherently worse or inferior in character?

World-renowned economist Ha Joon Chang argues that people and countries are not inferior in this way. “Poor countries have a lot of people who are unemployed or underemployed... This is the result of economic conditions rather than culture. The fact that immigrants from poor countries with ‘lazy’ cultures work much harder than the locals when they move to rich countries proves the point.”⁸ In the past, Japanese were considered lazy and Germans as thieves, but with economic prosperity, outcomes and perceptions of the two countries completely changed.⁹ If cultures are not economically inferior, then what factors contributed to the increased violence and economic poverty experienced by Mexico? I highlight three particular U.S. policies: Reagan’s War on Drugs, NAFTA/CAFTA, and farm subsidies.

Under President Ronald Reagan, drug enforcement and the previously coined term ‘War on Drugs’ saw rapid escalation¹⁰ which continued on through succeeding administrations. In reflection and apology, President Bill Clinton described how the U.S. proceeded to effectively shut down air and sea routes forcing drug trafficking to come up through Mexico; Clinton’s own administration effectively “broke up Colombian cartels [which] empowered Mexican drug gangs, who until then had largely been middlemen. With more power came more money. With

⁸ Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (Bloomsbury Press, 2008), Kindle, chap. 9.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ “Reagan declares ‘War on Drugs,’ October 14, 1982,” Politico Web Page, <http://www.politico.com/story/2010/10/reagan-declares-war-on-drugs-october-14-1982-043552> [accessed December 15, 2015].

more money came more violence... [, and] Mexico, [became] home to about a half-dozen extraordinarily powerful and violent cartels.”¹¹

The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) “signed by Canada, Mexico and the United States... came into force on January 1, 1994... to eliminate barriers to trade and investment between the U.S., Canada and Mexico. The implementation of NAFTA on January 1, 1994 brought the immediate elimination of tariffs on more than one-half of Mexico's exports to the U.S. and more than one-third of U.S. exports to Mexico.”¹² While the U.S. and Mexico both reduced tariffs on exports and imports, one must not forget that the U.S. was and is a far wealthier nation entering a market game with a far poorer nation. If this advantage was not great enough, “the U.S., Europe and Japan spend \$350 billion each year on agricultural subsidies (seven times as much as global aid to poor countries), and this money creates gluts that lower commodity prices and erode the living standard of the world's poorest people... [T]hese farm subsidies cost poor countries about \$50 billion a year in lost agricultural exports.”¹³ “Mexico is a particularly striking example of the failure of premature wholesale trade liberalization.”¹⁴

¹¹ “Bill Clinton Apologizes To Mexico For War on Drugs,” Huff Post Politics Web Page, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/02/13/bill-clinton-apology-drug-war-mexico_n_6680412.html [accessed December 15, 2015].

¹² “North American Free Trade Agreement,” Wikipedia Web Page, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/North_American_Free_Trade_Agreement [accessed December 15, 2015].

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“Farm subsidies that Kill,” The New York Times Opinion Web Page, http://www.nytimes.com/2002/07/05/opinion/farm-subsidies-that-kill.html?_r=0 [accessed December 15, 2015].

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Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (Bloomsbury Press, 2008), Kindle, chap. 3.

Sadly, it is precisely the agricultural industry that is most precious to developing countries. “In the earlier stages of development, most people live on agriculture, so developing agriculture is crucial in reducing poverty. Higher agricultural productivity also creates a pool of healthy and productive workers that can be used later for industrial development. In the early stages of development, agricultural products are also likely to account for a high share of exports, as the country may have little else to sell.”¹⁵ NAFTA hoped that Mexican corn-farmers, “would act “rationally” and continue farming, even as less expensive corn imported from the United States flooded the market.”¹⁶ The corn-farmers were expected to obtain foreign investment, switch to growing strawberries and vegetables and export them; [i]nstead, the farmers exported themselves” leading to massive Mexican migration.¹⁷

What is a good solution? A good solution requires responsible and historically knowledgeable politicians and policy. For decades, social workers and allies have filled the gaps of devastation caused by irresponsible policies. A good solution would allow for proper status and employment visas; this would help offset some of the labor trafficking at the border. A good solution is not to be ahistorical and blame the Mexican people and build more walls. I believe the farm subsidies, in its current form, should cease, and direct subsidies, grants and loans should go to small farmers. The U.S. should find a way to build roads and develop farms in Mexico. When I was in Kenya, the Chinese government had just finished building Kenya a super highway. Especially because Mexico is our neighbor and because of our history, the U.S. should work to

¹⁵ Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (Bloomsbury Press, 2008), Kindle, chap. 3.

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“Nafta Should Have Stopped Illegal Immigration,Right?,” New York Times Week In Review Web Page, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/18/weekinreview/18suchitelle.html> [accessed December 15, 2015].

¹⁷

Ibid.

ensure that both countries rise together. The rules need to make sense to insure competition.

When I play basketball with my son, I make rules that restrict me and allow both of us a fair chance to win, but I long for the day when we can simply play with one set of rules. This is how I view government assistance; I do not see it as a solution but one of the morally mandated tools by which we help others reach their fullest potential. My only caveat is that we equally value people wherever they are and whatever their potential may be.