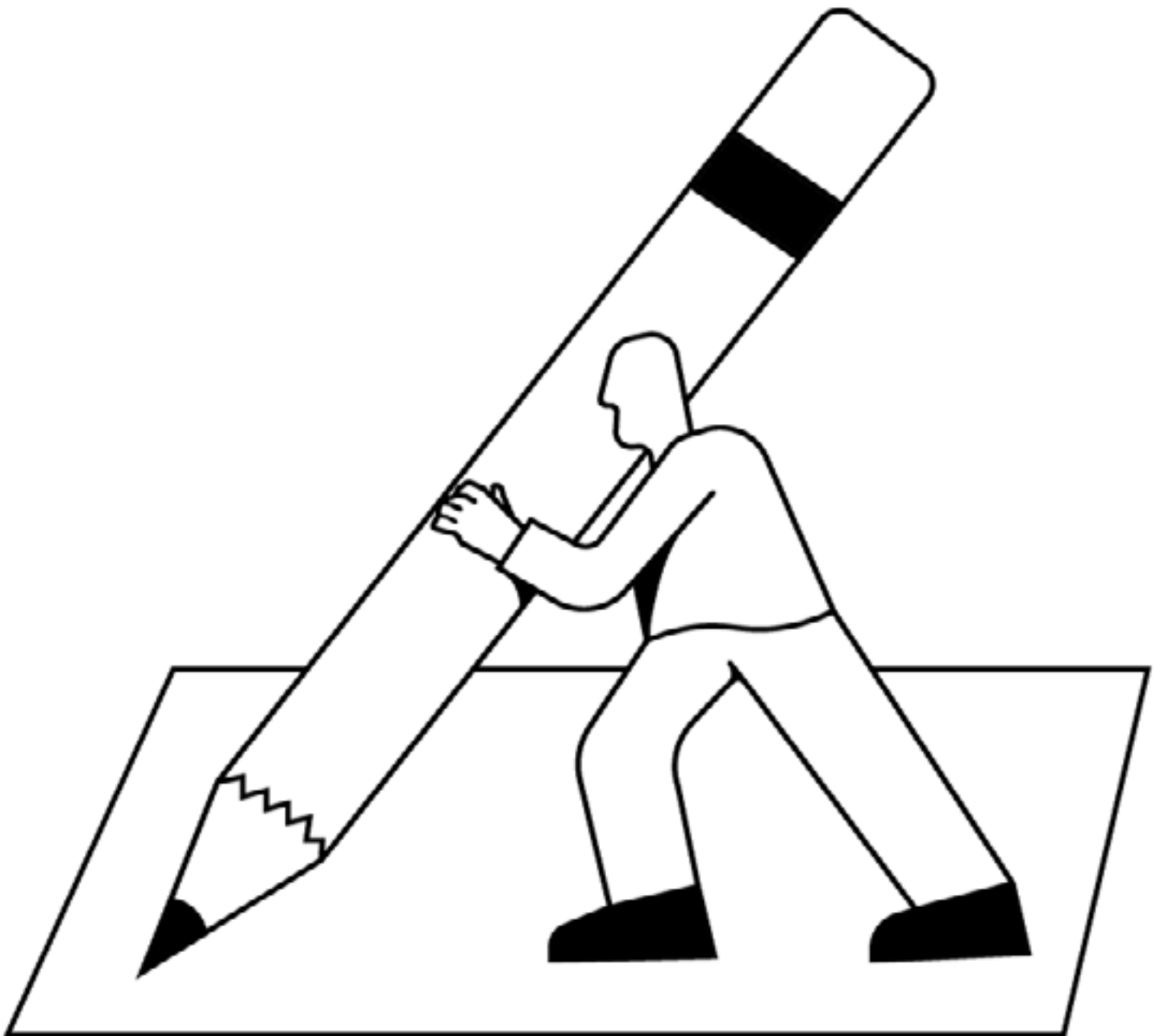


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THE

Brigham Young

POLITICAL REVIEW



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Dear readers,

The holiday season is possibly my favorite season of the year - I can't help but fall in love with gently falling snow, the smell of pine and mint, and warm hot chocolate. That is, after all my finals are over. With the end of the semester rapidly approaching, I find myself headed swiftly toward panic considering what still must get done before December 22nd rolls around.

Often this time of year is accompanied by a bit of anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. The quest for "perfection" - ever unachievable but always alluring - is a familiar struggle to many (myself included!). Yet in the quest for academic perfection, may we remember the words of Walt Whitman: "I contain multitudes" (Song of Myself, 51).

We contain multitudes, we are not monoliths. You are not just a good student; you could be an athlete, a musician, a kind sibling, a thoughtful friend, someone who really enjoys playing chess, the friend who always offers to drive, a person who decorates for Christmas in November... I guess my point is, I am not defined by the one attribute I've chosen for myself and neither are you. Each of the many characteristics we attribute to identify with are valuable in their individual ways. Reader, you've heard it before but I'm going to tell you again: perfection is not possible (at least, in this life). There are many other things worth reaching for.

May this be the semester you get an A minus or heaven forbid! - a C! - and continue to live unbruised.

Happy holidays,

MEGAN BAIRD
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The BYU Political Review is a student publication of BYUPAS
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“THE SCORCHING SPOTLIGHT OF A CULTURE WAR”

5

BY ABISH FATANI

I couldn't stand the idea of a woman having to have a single pure life and a man being able to have a double life, one pure and one not." Published in 1963 this sentence was a part of Sylvia Plath's banned novel, *The Bell Jar*. A novel exploring the roles and expectations of women, Plath's pen became her sword. She was suppressed due to the brutal honesty she utilized to explain how her role as Woman had become suffocating. She explored aspects of the womanhood she experienced in the 60's, never shying away from the nitty gritty. Since Plath's time the western world has experienced many changes and shifts when it comes to gender and its roles and expectations. Not only is this shift integral to where gender rights reside today, but it is also in line with human tendencies and history. In the "nineteenth century, ideas about gender started to change" in the Western world. Women were becoming more independent and their identities started to detach from that of a man's. Understandings of gender have changed in Africa, Latin America, and Asia due to colonial influences not meshing with traditional understandings of gender. There is much variation to how different indigenous cultures globally understand gender. Notions of gender and what it entails are not universally understood. Depending on region, family, culture, media, and religion, one's understanding of gender and how it applies to them will change. Oftentimes gender goes beyond a simple personal identification. In the Western world, gender is not just about identity but also about power. Due to socialization we often have a very limited view and understanding of what gender is and what it can be to those around us. Understanding that humankind does not and has not viewed gender as a universal or unchanging standard is vital to truly understanding and empathizing with the transgender community.

In 2023 alone there were and are 586 anti-trans bills in the U.S. Anti-trans bills are defined as a bill looking to erase transgender people from the public, bills that are "seeking to deny access to basic healthcare, legal recognition, education, bathrooms, athletics, or the right to openly exist in public schools." The stark increase of anti-trans legislation is a striking hit to an already vulnerable community; 42% of transgender adults have attempted suicide and 81% of transgender adults have considered it. Earlier this year the New York Times published an article highlighting how conservatives were mobilized by a campaign against trans rights. The article talks about how these "efforts have thrust them [transgender adults and children], at a moment of increased visibility and vulnerability, into the center of the nation's latest battle over cultural issues." This battle has become unhelpful and reductive in the conversation of understanding transgender people and creating a safer environment. This movement has been detrimental to the health and safety of the transgender people both in this country and abroad; while legislation is typically limited to our country's border, rampant anti-trans material and sentiments as well as the slew of misinformation is not limited to our fifty states.

Partially due to this cultural war, I am always hesitant to discuss transgender people's identities, experiences, and if one sees them as valid. When people view the validity of trans identities as a debate topic and our rights as a mere aspect of a cultural war, our humanity is pulled into question. When your humanity is constantly questioned you feel less than human. Transgender people are people! Not only are we human beings but there is ample evidence to support that gender-affirming

care not only works but aids in bettering the mental health of trans people. Not only has the cultural war put transgender people down and allowed others to believe that trans identities are less than valid, it has also peddled misinformation regarding what gender-affirming care is. Gender-affirming care is creating an environment where trans people can "move through the world safely as the gender they know themselves to be." Gender-affirming care is anything from correct pronoun usage to puberty blockers to gender-affirming surgery to hormone therapy. Gender-affirming care has become a buzzword and "gotcha" moment, when in reality it is well researched and proven to work to better the lives of transgender people.

Another fear mongering misconception often pushed is that social media makes someone transgender. No one becomes trans because they use social media. The truth is the democratization of information that occurred due to the ease of internet access has opened up our world ten-fold. Greater knowledge of the world around us often allows us to grow into ourselves. We find out our likes and dislikes, we learn there's a word for the specific smell after it rains, we learn that there are people who feel similarly when it comes to gender identity. When it comes to research about trans people and the internet, it has only been proven to allow trans people to have better access to resources and community. While it has had this positive effect, it has also been shown that transgender kids are more likely to experience cyberbullying due to heavy anti-trans sentiments across the web. Another factor that contributes to the argument against transgender people's existence is our societal understandings of gender and sex. Our society tends to view sex and gender in stark boxes, when in reality there is no box - there are simply many things that we don't understand as well as we let on. For example, sex is not just two boxes. XX vs XY chromosomes will develop so differently, and sometimes a person's DNA doesn't even host either of those combinations (shoutout to intersex people). If we do not even make room to understand the many variations of human DNA, how can we in good conscience enter into this conversation? The popular view of sex and gender being both well differentiated and paired is not congruent with the scientific reality of the human gene pool and experience. Because the view of sex and gender as intrinsically compatible is far from reality, as well as there being rampant misunderstandings of the concepts of sex and gender, I find it difficult to believe the many reasons people give as to why transness exists. Trans-ness exists, and trying to figure out why it exists with a limited understanding takes away from the core of this situation: understanding transgender people, and, in turn, creating a better landscape for our health and safety.

I have spent much time thinking about this. From the history of transgender people abroad and at home, to how gender is understood in the western world vs other cultures and societies, to why I can't make my gender identity align with my sex, it never seems to leave my mind. Transgender people are people. When it comes to our care and our identities, listen to us. When it comes to trans kids and their identities, listen to them, support them, don't talk down to them or insult them. Trans people are only a small percentage of this country, yet are the spotlight of a culture war that is beaming with bigotry, apathy, and misinformation. It's leaving third degree burns. If you're not ready to listen to us or the well-supported research, then please keep our names out of your mouth.

“IN THIS ECONOMY?” - A LOOK 6 AT GEN Z’S FUTURE IN AMERICA”

BY BRENDAN ARMSTRONG

If you sit in on a conversation between my close friends and I, you’re likely to hear the question, “In this economy?” asked at least once. While we use this expression jokingly, most times to imply that something is too expensive and that we, as college students, don’t have money to pay for it, there is some merit to the idea that Gen Zers are soon to face financial trouble. After all, inflation is high, wages are low, and we are witnessing the results of ineffective policy to combat these controversies. So what is on Gen Z’s radar? Why should we be a little frenzied? Let’s talk about it.

1.)

The first thing I wish to analyze is housing prices. If you’re like me, the concept of living in a house, let alone BUYING a house, sounds insane (and not because I don’t want to own one). In Utah, the average home price is \$545,000 [1]. I’m 24 years old; I think I’ll be about 40 when I can comfortably make that purchase. Utah is on the high end of housing prices, but equally, the Federal Reserve of Saint Louis finds that the median home price in the U.S. is \$416,100 this year [2]. These numbers are astronomically high, trending higher and higher as time goes on. Explaining these trends is a whole beast in itself, but that conversation is for another time (maybe next semester). The principle remains that Gen Z is looking at an expensive housing market with years of debt and loan repayment.

2.)

Secondly, climate change has the potential to disrupt the global supply chain and cause catastrophic harm for the American economy. To put it simply, even though America might not be the first to see the effects of a changing climate (lean economies are disproportionately impacted by them first), it will be one of many to experience the ramifications due to globalization and specialization involved with international trading. To that end, America will suffer “significant risks to microfinance stability,” as it accommodates altering weather patterns and shocks to the global economy [3]. Gen Z will be in charge of mitigating these risks by actively combating climate change and creating economically-friendly policies that en-

sure economic growth while protecting the planet. To date, I have yet to see this done efficiently and discern that Gen Z will bear the responsibility of this issue.

3.)

Lastly, there is some concern over the relationship between wage growth and inflation. Low levels of inflation are often seen as a good thing, as they imply a strong economy. It only becomes dangerous when those levels get high enough to the point where wages and job growth are unable to keep up. In an economy that is experiencing higher levels of inflation, as we have witnessed both recently and historically, there is reason to be speculative. In April of 2021, for the first time in recent years, the rate of inflation exceeded the growth of wages, and that lasted all the way until March of 2023. [4] Certainly the relationship between these two phenomena fluctuates, but Gen Z will have to find a way to stabilize the balance between these two. Supporting stronger wages while accounting for higher levels of inflation will prove to be difficult and something that Gen Zers will have to account for.

While there are many reasons why Gen Z should be apprehensive about its future in America, I don’t wish to scare you. There are various issues that are coming our way, yet I believe that this generation is one to provide the strongest group of leaders this country has seen. In my opinion, Gen Z has more passion and drive than older generations and is more open-minded when it comes to the issues I presented here. On top of that, Gen Z is on track to be the best-educated generation yet [5]. As a result of all of this, I’m optimistic that our future will be built on consensus, efficiency, and political stability, allowing Gen-Z to save America’s economic future.

“THE FAKE HUSTLE” 7

BY CALEB JOHNSTON

The job seemed like a great fit. A passionate individual who wanted to work in supply chain management, I was hoping for an internship with a little more sparkle than a warehouse position. The job description asked for “game-changers” and gave me optimism—I thought I could be one of those game-changers. I interviewed, and I came with intensity, telling my interviewer I wanted to innovate. He responded by painting a picture of how he saw me, as someone who liked to have free rein in a work environment. That depiction of me was inaccurate, and I thought, “Had I lied to paint that picture?” No matter my internal qualms, I got the job. I found a culture of work in which people were passionate or at least acted like it. I, on the other hand, struggled to latch onto that passion; at the end of the day, our company was a middleman for ecommerce companies, especially supplement brands. How did I get into this job for which I was a poor fit?

More and more, employers are asking for passion from their potential hires. I expand passion to include ambitious qualities like initiative and innovation. Research from Harvard Business School indicates that the word “passion” appeared in only 2% of job postings in 2007. In 2019, “passion” was in 16% of job postings [9]. CBS reports that the number one most popular corporate buzzword was “innovative,” with “self-starter” at number seven [4]. Companies are asking for passion, innovation, and initiative out of their applicants, even for roles that don’t match such lofty expectations. Applicants match the job description by exaggerating their work results and selling their hobbies as passion projects. This is what I call the fake hustle. First, they dust off the thesaurus to enhance their internship experience which they mostly passed on Instagram. Then, they dress up the “Personal” section of their resume. On the side, casual volunteering is no longer acceptable. The local basketball coach is now someone who led and inspired disadvantaged youth while implementing an articulate training plan. For evidence that such exaggeration exists, scan a batch of resumes and extrapolate that to reality; poverty still persists despite the fact that resume-boosters are at war with it.

The reality is that employers are asking for passion that many applicants don’t actually have, especially Generation Z. Gallup reports that Gen Z is more likely to get burnt out at work and less likely to be actively engaged in their work [3]. According to ResumeBuilder, 74% of managers and business leaders believe Gen Z is “more difficult to work with than other generations.” This same group reports that Gen Z shows a “lack of effort, motivation and productivity.” [5] It doesn’t take intense research to identify this trend: talk with any young software developer and ask them how much they work. Or, consider that Gen Z’s preference for “working from home” could really be a euphemism for “not working.” A gaping chasm should be obvious: more job descriptions are asking for passion, yet Gen Z is less able to offer it. How is this gap overcome? Lying.

In a ResumeLab survey earlier this year, 70% of participants admitted to lying at least once on their resume with 37% saying they lie frequently. Similarly, 80% had lied during a job interview, with 44% lying frequently. Participants with Mas-

ter’s or doctoral degrees were more likely to lie [7]. Even if you don’t blatantly lie, career consultants will tell you to embellish your past accomplishments, saying that it’s not dishonest. Our depiction of honesty is inappropriately black and white. The reality is that a broad gray area exists; intentional exaggeration falls in that gray area. While hyperbole in job interviews may not indicate moral bankruptcy, it certainly isn’t virtuous. Well-meaning mentors may soften the moral question by insisting that everyone else exaggerates, and if you don’t, you’ll be left behind. This is a tenuous argument for moral vindication, especially because it has its victims. By exaggerating, you cheat yourself and your employer out of a good fit, and you prevent a more qualified individual from getting the job.

Employers also have a tendency to stretch the truth. Objectively dull jobs are advertised as game-changing, invigorating experiences in which only someone with passion and proactivity can thrive. Look no further than the job title: Subway inflates their rank and file employee to a “Sandwich Artist,” while corporations rebrand the receptionist a “Director of First Impressions.” [8] Applicants exaggerate the truth because their employers show such a strong appetite for it. Moreover, machine-driven hiring processes reward meaningless exaggeration—your application may get turned down if your resume doesn’t have the desired keywords [2].

No matter who is at fault, we would all benefit from more honesty on both sides. I make that claim as a reformed fake-hustler. I too have overstated my passion for work and my desire to innovate. I even pursued a passion project, a road-bike ride from California to Virginia. Alongside other motives, I thought the trip would make for a unique line on my resume and a strong talking point in an interview. In a cruel twist of irony, I returned from that bike ride unemployed and unmotivated to work. My passion to seriously pursue any job was lacking, and I was unwilling to lie about my passion to get a job. Instead, I started a moving business which has been successful and provides internal satisfaction I didn’t have in other recent jobs. Curiously, I found passion in work when I chose not to lie about it.

American author Robert Brault stated, “Every lie is two lies, the lie we tell others and the lie we tell ourselves to justify it” [6]. In this case, the justifying lie is that we need to exaggerate to keep up and get ahead. Employers may think that they need to embellish a job to attract top talent. Research suggests that honesty yields other benefits: giving a realistic job preview reduces turnover and improves employee satisfaction [2]. Anyways, a company like Subway should question if they really need artists making sandwiches. On an individual level, my prescription for the lying problem is simple: don’t do it. Hyperbole is not needed to get ahead, and if someone feels the need to exaggerate their passion for a certain job, they ought to question if the job is actually the right fit. If we stop lying on both sides, companies will find better matches with employees, and employees will have better experiences. It’s understandable that people want to reach for the top job and employers for the top talent. Regardless, honesty is still the best policy.

“EVALUATING RELIGIOUS FREEDOM THROUGH THE LENS OF HOLIDAY GREETINGS”

BY ISABEL HALLOWS

The beloved holiday season is upon us, bringing with it a heightened sense of service, love, giving, and coziness. In the mix of such delightful spirits and feelings, all of us encounter what seems to be an inescapable bombardment of holiday greetings on signage outside of buildings, emails from your favorite brands, and in every interpersonal engagement. This festive cacophony often sparks conversations about the appropriateness of holiday greetings in our diverse and pluralistic society; the seemingly innocuous phrase “Happy Holidays” has emerged as a compromised attempt at being inclusive and culturally sensitive. However, beneath this linguistic shift lies a broader societal question—one that delves into the intricate relationship between the separation of church and state and the preservation of moral principles that have long guided our societal landscape legally, morally, and culturally. As we navigate this discourse, it becomes clear that the conversation extends beyond mere semantics; it is a reflection of our collective effort to strike a balance between diversity and the foundational values that bind us together.

Principles of religious freedom have deep roots in the history of the Americas; as it was seeking this very liberty that drove the pilgrims onto the Mayflower and towards a new land. This vitality for religious freedom was enshrined in statute with the creation and ratification of the Bill of Rights. At its opening, our first amendment “provides that Congress make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting its free exercise”, emphasizing the profundity of this issue. This rich history sets the stage for contemporary discussions surrounding the separation of church and state, how to uphold religious freedom without abandoning religious presence in culture. In these discussions, the metaphorical notion of a “wall” often surfaces, symbolizing the division between these two influential and necessary entities in our society.

As we navigate the complexities of religious freedom and societal harmony, I feel it crucial to reevaluate this metaphor, as prompted by Elder Oaks in his various discourses on the issue. He proposes a more nuanced metaphor—a “curtain” that defines boundaries without hindering the passage of light, love, and mutual support. In a western world shaped by Judeo-Christian values, the idea of complete separation poses challenges to the moral principles guiding our legal systems. Instead of an impenetrable wall, a metaphorical “curtain” could preserve institutional separation while recognizing the shared values underpinning our society.

The ongoing debate surrounding the holiday greeting “Happy Holidays” versus the traditional “Merry Christmas” provides a tangible example of the need for a metaphorical curtain rather than a wall. The shift toward a more inclusive greeting reflects a broader societal attempt to avoid offense and respect the diverse beliefs of individuals. However, the intention behind this change should be examined closely. Is it a genuine effort to foster inclusivity, or does it risk abandoning the moral principles that have long been embedded in our cultural fabric, that are foundational to our ideals as a nation and a people?

“Merry Christmas” encapsulates the essence of the holiday season—a time of love, service, and giving. This greeting represents the best in humankind, transcending religious boundaries. It should be received with the same warmth and appreciation as any other well-wishing. In a diverse society, expressing good wishes according to one’s beliefs should not be perceived as offensive. Just as it is an honor to hear someone say, “May Allah bless you,” extending a “Merry Christmas” greeting should be met with an understanding of the goodwill and shared values it embodies. As we embrace the richness of our history, acknowledging the deep roots of religious freedom, let us navigate our holiday greetings not only with a commitment to inclusivity, understanding, but with an appreciation for the shared values that make our society strong and prosperous. In doing so, we honor not only the diverse beliefs of individuals but also the moral principles that have shaped our cultural fabric and continue to guide us as a nation and a people.



“ON RELIGION AND REPRESENTATION” 9

BY JANE DRINKWATER

One of these things is not like the others: 100% of Utah’s federal representatives are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 90% of Utah’s state officials are Church members, and 60% of Utah citizens are Church members [1].

Growing up as a Church member in Utah County, it always seemed to me that most of my neighbors were Church members. I remember elementary school teachers assuming that my classmates would understand words like “ward”, “bishop”, and “primary”, and I remember church parties being synonymous with neighborhood parties.

I was less apt to notice the few houses on my block whose kids weren’t in my primary class and who showed up to neighborhood parties late, having missed the official invitation in Sacrament meeting. I knew that caucuses and birthday parties and recitals were held in my meetinghouse, but I never paid attention to the few small chapels of other churches. It took me years to learn of my city’s thriving Catholic church, the vibrant Apostolic band, or the yearly mission trips from a local nondenominational congregation [2].

My community—like much of Utah—owes a great deal to these other faiths. People who aren’t members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints teach in our schools, staff our hospitals, feed our hungry, and heal our brokenhearted. They do just about everything—except govern.

Especially in local and state elections, where partisan cues play less of a role, it’s crucial that candidates for public office signal their cultural acceptability to voters. In Utah (partly because Church members vote at higher rates than non-members), this includes signaling their Church membership. Being part of a local ward—especially in a leadership role—is one of the most effective ways to build the trust and name recognition required to win an election. This puts non-members at a disadvantage.

In addition to Church members dominating government offices, the Church as an organization holds a lot of influence over Utah politics. The members who make up 90% of representatives and 60% of voters often base their political decisions on

Church teachings, so Church policies are reflected in voting behavior. Even beyond the polls, the Church itself is a major economic player, giving it a certain degree of influence over Utah’s government.

This is not a critique of specific policies of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of the Church’s political involvement, or of the behavior of Church members. I am a devout Church member, and I am grateful for the way my religious background influences my political views. This is simply a call for more religious diversity in Utah’s politics. I hope that the 40% of my community who are not members of the Church can also feel free to live—and vote—according to their faith, to run for office, to advocate for policies, and to fully integrate into Utah life. I’m certain their increased influence would only make our state’s government stronger, more inclusive, and better prepared to serve its people.

Solving this complex problem goes beyond the scope of this article, but here are a few ideas as a start. Organizations and individuals recruiting candidates for office could ensure they’re directing proportional resources and attention to non-member potential candidates, rather than just relying on church connections. Political events like debates and candidate open houses could be held in community churches other than Latter-day Saint chapels. Where appropriate, elected officials could seek policy input from organizations like the Utah Valley Interfaith Council and Salt Lake Interfaith Roundtable.

For nearly 200 years, members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have made this Utah desert blossom like a rose by strengthening communities and engaging in politics. These contributions will always be crucial to our state’s identity, but it’s time for our government to reflect our state’s religious diversity.

“NOT ALL BYU STUDENTS: AN ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL OPINIONS ON CAMPUS” 10

BY KATELYN GALE

Since 2022, college student interview videos have increased in popularity on social media. The general format of these videos goes like this: a person approaches a student on a college campus, asks said student various questions about social and political issues, then posts the video to a social media page. Most notably, interviews on BYU campus have gained much traction on social media. At the beginning of their popularity, BYU campus interviews generally included anti-BYU sentiments, aiming to criticize different BYU policies and practices. Recently, however, these interviews have shifted from a social commentary on BYU as an institution to a negative social commentary on BYU students.

The most notable group that conducts such interviews is the Black Menaces. The Black Menaces, a social media activism group that gained immense popularity in early 2022, have a wide variety of videos, ranging from on-campus interviews to podcast clips, all of which are aimed at increasing awareness of diversity and equality issues at both BYU and other campuses. In watching such videos, I wondered if the responses in the videos truly represented the BYU population. On average, a BYU on-campus interview includes at least 2 and at most 4 respondents, which cannot rightly be used to generalize all of BYU's 34,937 student population [1].

And so, I set out to test how diverse BYU students' opinions are on hot-button topics. To do this, I conducted a field survey that measured student opinions on different topics from feminism to LGBTQ issues. Since I wanted to test the reliability of the interviews, I modeled most of the questions on the survey after questions that the Black Menaces have asked students in the past. While I initially wanted to obtain 300 survey responses, handing out surveys to people proved more difficult, time-consuming, and intimidating than I initially predicted. Because of this, I obtained 102 responses (a big thank you to everyone who helped) [2][3].

Demographics:

- 50% of respondents were men and 50% were women
- 22.5% of respondents were freshmen, 24.5% sophomores, 29.4% juniors, 20.6% seniors, 2% graduate students, and 1% BYU alumni
- 44.1% of respondents identified as republican, 27.5% independent, 12.7% democrat, 4% unaffiliated, 2% moderate, 4% preferred not to disclose their political leaning, 1% leftist, and 3% responded “other.”
- 32.4% of respondents voted for Donald Trump in the 2020 election, 14.7% voted for Joe Biden, 5% did not respond, and 48% listed “other,” which includes 32.4% who did not vote, either due to being an international student, underage, or a missionary at the time, and 15.6% due to forgetting or unintelligible responses.

Questions:

- “Who is the current Vice President of the United States?”
- “Do you consider yourself a feminist?”

- “Do you support same-sex marriage?”
- “Would you ever date a transgender individual?”
- “Do you believe that sexism exists?”
- “Do you believe that racism exists?”
- “Do you believe that systemic racism exists?”
- “Do you believe that BYU is inclusive?”
- “Do you believe that the United States legally oppresses any group of people?”

Results:

My overall hypothesis for this survey was that BYU students' opinions would be more positive than the opinions showcased in the interview videos, where positive opinions on average represent 20% of the responses shown in the videos [4]. Here are the most interesting results:

- 53% of respondents consider themselves a feminist, 46% do not consider themselves a feminist, and 1% did not respond. 43.1% of male respondents and 62.7% of female respondents consider themselves feminists.
- 48% of respondents support same-sex marriage, 49% do not support same-sex marriage, and 3% did not respond. 43.1% of male respondents and 51% of female respondents support same-sex marriage.
- 5.9% of respondents would date a transgender individual, 93.1% would not date a transgender individual, and 1% did not respond. 4% of male respondents and 7.8% of female respondents would date a transgender individual.
- 76.5% of respondents believe that BYU is inclusive, 17.6% do not believe BYU is inclusive, and 5.9% did not respond.
- 78.4% of respondents believe that systemic racism exists, 19.6% do not believe that systemic racism exists, and 2% did not respond. 72.5% of male respondents believe systemic racism exists and 82.4% of female respondents believe systemic racism exists.

Discussion:

What can we conclude? The data, with random sampling and as minimal measurement bias as I could control for, shows that BYU students generally have more positive social and political opinions than social media would suggest. The most evident outlier in the data is BYU students' views on dating transgender individuals, the results of which do fall in line with social media portrayal. It is also important to note that merely believing that racism or sexism exists does not imply active effort to mitigate racism or sexism on campus. Even so, I do think it is encouraging that the data shows an acknowledgment of important diversity and equality problems in our society today, thus signaling BYU students' increased awareness relative to social media portrayal. And so, the next time you are on social media, remember that it is truly “not all BYU students.”

“2023’S BIGGEST LOSER: DISNEY” 11

BY NATHAN CHASE

As we reflect back on 2023, there is a clear loser: the Walt Disney Company. As one of the most iconic and wealthy American corporations, it has captured the hearts of numerous generations around the world. Most BYU students grew up around the end of the Disney Renaissance in the 90’s, with classics such as *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Toy Story*, and *The Lion King*. In the 2000’s who didn’t imagine having a wand and drawing the Disney Channel logo during the commercial breaks? The 2010’s was another revival era, as Disney produced popular films while making record profits by acquiring *Marvel* and *Star Wars* and producing live-action remakes of their classic animated films.

However, something feels off with Disney these days. It is one of the greatest examples of American companies that have lost their way because of shareholder pressure to increase already huge earnings while prioritizing diversity and inclusion over excellent storytelling and character building. Newer films have failed to break even at the box office and millions of subscribers have canceled their Disney+ subscriptions. Disney’s stock is at its lowest level in almost a decade [1]. Everyone can agree that the feud between Disney and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis has not ended well for Disney. No matter where you lean on the issue, court battles, lawsuits, withdrawal of investments in Orlando, and loss of their special district in Florida have all damaged the brand [2]. There are two factors that Disney must change their approach to if they want to turn things around.

Greed:

After Disney bought *Pixar*, *Marvel*, *Star Wars*, and *Fox*, there was more output of content which led to record high earnings. When *Frozen* was released in 2013, it became the highest-grossing animated film at the time. Each of the new *Star Wars* movies topped the charts, and no one will forget the epic 20 film *Marvel* saga that culminated with *Avengers: End Game*, which had the biggest weekend opening and held the record for highest-earning film of all time for years [3]. When COVID-19 struck, Disney+ arrived. By the early 2020s, Disney had amassed a staggering \$28.7 billion in revenue [4].

To maintain these earnings, Disney has pushed to crank out content at an unprecedented rate. Unfortunately, this rush to produce movies diluted the quality of the films. More janky CGI *Marvel* films and TV series kept coming. Newer *Star Wars* movies have failed to captivate the loyal fanbase. The new live-action films and sequels to beloved franchises are simply quick

has fallen into lackluster storylines and an overabundance of CGI, which has watered down the industry standard that Disney once set. Movies are not the only issue. Tickets to Disney World cost \$40 (approximately \$60 adjusted for inflation) 20 years ago. A visit to Cinderella’s castle today will set you back more than \$160 per person, not including the hotel and souvenirs. [5]

Diversity and Inclusion Index and Scores:

Although it is good to include greater diversity and inclusion in Disney’s properties, it has become an obsession that has been the emphasis of their most recent films. However, the company’s approach to inclusiveness appears forced rather than natural. Many businesses now use a “Diversity and Inclusion Index” to determine how well they are performing in terms of inclusion. Disney has a perfect score, and to maintain that score, they are under pressure to cater to political correctness that sometimes comes across as cringey [6]. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion efforts are well-intended, but they are forcing a standard checklist of what filmmakers must include rather than using creative freedom. Companies are afraid of how they will appear in the public eye if they do not cater to everyone all the time. The upcoming live-action *Snow White* remake is a prime example of Disney failing to understand why their audience is frustrated. Rachel Zegler, the lead actress, sparked outrage by dismissing the original film’s premise in favor of a more progressive take on the classic Disney princess. Also, the film does not seem to feature the *Seven Dwarfs* authentically [7]. Instead of staying true to the charm of the original movie, Disney is taking an approach to make their properties something that they are not. People watch these films to escape to a fantasy world, not to have political and cultural agendas infiltrate the message, especially if they are aimed at children.

Time To Look Back To Move Forward:

Disney can turn things around. Several of their most recent films produced by a number of their film studios demonstrate how they can produce a quality film that tells a meaningful story, has strong characters, and does diversity in a more natural way while still making a record profit such as *Black Panther*, *The Mandalorian*, and *Encanto* [8]. If Disney wants to have a better 2024 and beyond, they must look back at what made them so beloved in the first place. Instead of catering to their stockholders, Disney should cater to children and families. Make Disney accessible to everyone, not just those who can afford to spend hundreds of dollars on a visit to your theme parks. Doing all this will help them bring back the magic.

“ISRAEL, PALESTINE, AND THE HOPELESSNESS OF NATIONALISM” 12

BY CALEB RINGGER

On October 7, 2023, Hamas militants killed over 1,000 Israeli civilians in the deadliest attack on Israeli soil in its 76-year history [1]. In response, Israel has killed nearly 15,000 Palestinians, mostly civilians, over the last two months. The heart-wrenching violence of the last two months is only the latest chapter in a conflict that has raged between Arabs and Jews in the land of historic Palestine for almost a century.

Discussing this conflict, especially in the poisonous context of social media, can generate a feeling of profound hopelessness. Experts and international observers have been markedly pessimistic about the chances of any significant change to the status quo after this conflict ends, besides the thousands of dead bodies that will litter the streets of Gaza [2]. Israel has been criticized for failing to provide any solid post-crisis plan for Gaza [3]. After the horrific violence, including war crimes on both sides, any hope for a constructive peace dialogue seems to be all but lost.

But why? Why does it feel so hopeless? What makes the Israel-Palestine conflict different from any other ethno-nationalist war that has been fought and eventually resolved over the last century, like the Rwandan Civil War or the wars in the Balkans? Why won't this problem go away? There is no simple answer to this question, but I'd like to suggest four contributing factors.

First, important pre-conflict historical factors created a uniquely contentious situation that set the stage for a uniquely intractable conflict. On the Palestinian side, the early 20th century saw the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the oppressive Turkish theocracy that had ruled Palestine since 1517. In exchange for the Arabs' help overthrowing the Ottomans, the British Empire made a vague territorial promise to the Arabs, who interpreted the promise to mean Arab control over the territory of Palestine in the future [4]. On the Israeli side, the horrors of the Holocaust gave Jewish settlers a unique moral authority to create their own exclusive ethno-state to protect Holocaust survivors from annihilation at the hands of their enemies [5]. Additionally, the fact that ancient Jewish presence in Palestine is not only well-documented but integral to the dominant religions of the region makes the two groups' competing claims unusually balanced—both groups can legitimately claim to be the rightful possessors of the land.

Second, both sides have received backing from external powers, which has enlarged this conflict beyond two small ethnic groups in one small corridor of the world. The United States has supported Israel militarily for decades, helping them transform into one of the most formidable militaries on Earth, one of only nine to possess nuclear weapons [6]. The Palestinians have also received support, though to a lesser extent, from the wider Islamic and Arab world—countries like Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and eventually Iran [7]. This has created a situation where both sides have benefited from the backing of huge segments of the international community, a situation that tends to prolong ethnic conflicts generally.

Third, religious extremists on both sides have prolonged the conflict and derailed potential peace talks over the decades. In 1995, at the height of Israel-Palestine peace talks, the Israeli prime minister was assassinated by a Jewish ex-

tremist who wanted to prevent a negotiated peace settlement with the Palestinians [8]. Even today, right-wing extremists hold seats in the Israeli government [9]. Obviously, extremism is a problem on the Palestinian side too—after all, the government of Gaza is controlled by Hamas, an Islamic fundamentalist group that launches rockets indiscriminately into Israeli cities. Israel responded to Hamas's seizure of power in Gaza in 2007 by blockading the entire Gaza Strip, a blockade that continues to this day [10]. A depressing pattern has emerged over the decades—moderate delegations of both sides get close to a peace agreement, then extremists kill some innocent people and the negotiations are called off in the ensuing chaos [11].

Finally, I argue that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has persisted because it reveals a fundamental flaw in the philosophy of nationalism, which has been the dominant philosophical framework of global politics since at least 1945, if not 1776. Nationalism, in its most basic form, is the idea that every nation on Earth has a right to establish a state on the land it claims for itself. Nationalism has achieved unprecedented success, dethroning imperialism, colonialism, and dynastic monarchy to become so ubiquitous most of us just take it for granted these days. As a philosophy, it has been wildly successful in liberating human beings from foreign oppressors and allowing for human flourishing.

But the philosophy of nationalism fails to provide a solution to the question posed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: What happens when two nations have equally legitimate claims to the same land and refuse to share it? Historically, the answer has been simple, but horrifying—one nation destroys the other (there's a reason there's no similar "US-Native American conflict" today). For what it's worth, neither side of this conflict has utterly annihilated the other. So in the modern world, with norms against war and genocide, what happens? As far as I'm aware, nationalism can provide no satisfactory answer.

I argue that there is only one possible solution—a move away from nationalism in the land of Palestine. Rather than insisting that distinct nations need their own distinct states, peace requires prioritizing liberal democracy and multi-ethnic republicanism. This means equal rights for all citizens, regardless of nationality or religion. This means disempowering nationalist and fundamentalist extremists on both sides. Most crucially, this means recognizing and ultimately accepting an extremely uncomfortable reality—that the borders that exist today are products of violence and injustice, but that they cannot be changed without unacceptable levels of violence today.

Accomplishing this goal will likely be the single most difficult issue in modern international politics. It cannot be done by force—if there's anything the first 23 years of this century has taught us, it's that Middle Eastern countries don't take kindly to having democratic ideals forced on them by Americans. This transition away from nationalism and toward multi-ethnic republicanism must be a bottom-up intellectual revolution among the people who live in Israel and Palestine. There is perhaps no better application of the phrase "easier said than done"—but there is no other way.

“FAITH, CHARITY, AND HOPE: ROLE OF FAITH IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT” 13

BY JACOB LEAVITT

It's Christmas time and I've been thinking a lot about faith, charity, and international development. In the spirit of the season, I hope to explain why faith is not only an element of but essential to sustainable development abroad and at home.

Faith's current role in international development is undeniable. Faith-based organizations (FBO) make up over two-thirds of active U.N. Civil Society Organizations (CSO)—non-profit, voluntary institutions typically established for societal improvement [1]. Religious regions in developed countries are among the most welcoming, capable, and committed for refugee resettlement [2]. 73% of all charitable donations are through FBOs and as faith declines in a country, charitable contributions and humanitarian participation also decrease in that country [3]. Religious organizations receive contributions from more diverse groups of people than other CSOs and they are more likely to encourage direct participation in charity [3]. It's clear that faith is uniquely involved in development but for us to prove causation, we need to understand why.

As I see it, there are two reasons why someone might participate in charity. First is narcissistic altruism—the idea that charity benefits the recipient as well as the benefactor. A narcissistic altruist might donate to feed starving children in a developing nation because he believes that in the future these children, if provided for now, could grow up to invent something that could improve his quality of life or contribute meaningfully to the market. Narcissistic altruism says, “I do charity for me.” The second reason for charity is faithful altruism—altruistic behavior resulting from a desire to serve God and/or a desire to aid our fellow beings. A faithful altruist would donate to relief funds because he believes the innate worth of a human soul, increasing human dignity and joy is his responsibility, and/or it is his duty as a follower of Deity to bless the lives of others. Faithful altruism says, “I do charity for my God and I do charity for my brother.” Although all FBOs espouse faithful altruism, not all CSOs inspired by faithful altruism are FBOs. An agnostic or atheistic CSO could still operate under a faithful belief in the kinship of humanity, for example.

Narcissistic altruism is fallible at best and entirely inoperative at worst. If philanthropy had an actionable economic advantage, economists would measure it and business people would apply it. We do not see, however, businesses or individuals employing charity as a means of maximizing shareholder earnings or increasing future cash flows. When businesses do engage in philanthropy, it is usually at the behest of a faithful altruist or it is

for “good press” and produces questionable results. If all fires of faithful altruism were extinguished overnight leaving behind only narcissistic altruism, there would be significantly less charity and the surviving charity would be ineffective. Take as an example charitable titans of industry like John D. Rockefeller and Bill and Melinda Gates. They donate because they believe it is the right thing to do [4], not because they hope they'll eventually get something in return. The effectual truth is that you can not do good for yourself and be charitable at the same time. After all, “when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God,” [5] not yourself.

Faith also provides the “how-to” to charity as well. Faith provides congregations of people anxiously engaged in doing good, the international structure to have both far-reaching impacts and influence at home, and moral authority that uniquely poises it to lead social engineering projects. FBOs are therefore better equipped to lead projects that reduce disease, alleviate injustice, and end conflicts. This gives FBOs extra leverage in combating causes of extreme poverty [1] [6]. In the past, the WTO, USAID, and the UN invested in large projects that boosted the GDP of a nation in the hopes that this would benefit the people. It did. But research has found that the kinds of projects historically connected with FBOs that address a specific problem in a specific area are more beneficial. Hence, WTO, USAID, UN, and most CSOs have switched strategies to fund lower level, community-focused projects previously associated with FBOs. These benefits are not isolated to developing countries. Even in wealthy countries, development is usually headed by faith. Hospitals, educational institutions, large infrastructure projects, and liberal-democratic governance are all innovations of faith. Being such, countries with more religious freedom have more institutions that invest in people and develop society.

“Whoso believeth in God might with surety hope for a better world” [7]. Sustainable development comes from making investments in society that do not directly benefit the benefactor. This investment is the fruit of faith. Therefore, faith is the root of sustainable development—faith is the root of hope. “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” [8]. Faith, charity, and hope are hard to maintain but most good things are. So, this Christmas, take time to devote yourself to faith, to charity, and to hope.

“MY GREAT POLITICAL CRY: *14* READ PLATO’S REPUBLIC”

BY ZACHARY BRIGHT

I have been a writer for The Political Review since 2021. It has been one of the best experiences of my education experience, and I encourage all to apply, read, and engage with The Political Review. Since this will be my last article, I thought about what I would want my final message to be for my few (if any) readers. Although many lessons and rants came to mind, one stood out from them all: read Plato’s Republic. I consider it to be one the greatest political, ethical, and literary works of all time. Most do not feel this way, but I feel it my duty to at least entice you to read the Republic.

There is no shortage of political nihilism in everyday conversation, especially in the United States[1][2]. Political nihilism is the view that politics is pointless, or our political state is headed in the wrong direction. Usually these two features of political nihilism feed into each other into a nihilistic equilibrium. No one is talking with each other, the opposing political party is omnipotent and the embodiment of evil, votes don’t matter, etc. Therefore, politics is pointless. Not so, says Plato.

Plato was in a unique position where he saw an abundance of political polarization. In his lifetime, he witnessed three different political systems from democracy to tyranny back to democracy. He saw friends murder friends over political stances, family members murder each other over political beliefs, and just gross decadence. Having lived through this political turmoil, Plato’s Republic becomes his response to resolving this political polarization.

His response revolves around two questions: (1) what is justice? and (2) in the absence of moral, social, or political consequences, why should we be just? Answering these two questions results in political unification. Why? First, clarifying what justice is will get everyone on the same page. Crucially, the justice with which Plato is concerned does not have to do with a political justice, he wants us to define the virtue of justice — how one should act to be a good person and the nature of goodness. Second, explaining why we should be just directly responds to political nihilism. In the face of total turmoil, why still strive to be a good citizen?

I won’t spoil Plato’s answers, mostly because he does not really give answers. That’s a bit misleading, but let me explain. Since Plato was skeptical of the book as a medium for education, he designed the Republic very carefully to avoid his concerns. He felt that the book should not tell you what to think, but how to think. This is important to remember because the Republic has a lot of very bizarre claims and (apparently) naïve arguments. People usually respond with disgust or congratulate Plato for his efforts but dismiss him as irrelevant. But, the Republic is supposed to spark these feelings. The challenge is for you, the reader, to think through the issues. So, when reading Plato, you should first ask, “Why does Plato want me to think about x?” Then follow up with, “What do I think about x?” Plato wanted books to cultivate an individual and the Republic does just that.

When I applied to the Political Review, I was asked what I thought of the future of American politics — were we headed in a good or bad direction? This was right after the BLM summer protests, January 6th riots, fraudulent elections, LGBTQ+ issues, etc. At the time, I said that I was hopeful for America because I felt that we would become stronger from the repeated stress. Well, things have arguably gotten worse since then, but my answer remains the same. But, I will say that improvement in a political society does not come from nowhere. It requires some effort. For this purpose, I recommend reading Plato’s Republic. Although I discourage not engaging with primary sources and not reading, most readers are college students, so finding time to read is difficult. A trustworthy substitute would be the podcast Ancient Greece Declassified. There you will find a series of episodes on Plato’s Republic (and other content) that will give the main ideas of the book with fascinating insights. I hope you will enjoy the Republic.

“PASSPORT TO PROSPERITY”

15

BY LEVI HILTON

In the tumultuous arena of immigration policy, the current system is fraught with challenges that demand our attention. What is wrong with immigration today? How does illegal immigration truly affect Americans? In this article, we will explore the economic and cultural impacts of immigration on the United States. By understanding the historical context, we can unravel the complexities that hinder open immigration today and propose a compelling argument for comprehensive reform.

To comprehend the present, we must first delve into the past. Historically, immigration has been the lifeblood of the United States, driving economic prosperity and enriching the cultural fabric of the nation. Economically, successive waves of immigrants have injected vitality into the workforce, fueling innovation and propelling the nation to new heights. In 2016 Wharton published research on this and summarized:

“The available evidence suggests that immigration leads to more innovation, a better educated workforce, greater occupational specialization, better matching of skills with jobs, and higher overall economic productivity.”

Immigration into America has brought about technological innovations that continue to change the world. Culturally, the amalgamation of diverse backgrounds has created a unique American identity. Many of my ancestors, just a few generations back, came as immigrants. I’m grateful they did because I love this country. My family has been so blessed because of their decision to come to America not so long ago.

Despite this storied history, the prospect of open immigration faces daunting hurdles in the contemporary landscape. Economic anxieties, national security concerns, and social tensions have coalesced to create an environment resistant to the idea of fully embracing immigration. Fears of job loss, strained public resources, and compromised national security have resulted in a prevailing sentiment that demands stringent immigration policies. In my mind, many of these fears are real. However, they can be mitigated in lots of ways. The Federal Reserve published an article addressing some of these concerns, pointing out flaws in thought, and addressing mitigation strategies.

“Immigrants are perceived as taking jobs away from native-born Americans and filling the rolls for public assistance without paying their share of taxes to replenish the kitty. Nothing could be further from the truth.”

To foster a more inclusive and pragmatic immigration system, we must adopt a comprehensive approach. Opening avenues for easier citizenship and

approach. Opening avenues for easier citizenship and streamlining the legal immigration process are essential steps in creating a more accessible path for those who seek to contribute to the nation. Simultaneously, reinforcing border security addresses legitimate concerns about national safety. Additionally, eliminating policies that prove unsustainable for immigration. These policies would be those that hinder economic growth such as rent control and unsustainable welfare programs.

Forexample, according to Wharton, “immigrants pay less in federal, state, and local taxes and use federally-funded entitlement programs such as Medicaid, SNAP, and other benefits at higher rates than natives. ... immigrants often impose a heavier tax burden on natives at the state and local level [compared to natives].”

Different state programs can have a massive impact. “As a result [of immigrant education variables and state policies], the estimated fiscal burden of immigration is five times higher for native residents of California than of New Jersey.”

What I’m arguing for is the urgent need to strike a delicate balance between openness, security, and sustainability. Embracing openness acknowledges the historical benefits of immigration and underscores the potential for continued economic and cultural enrichment. Robust security measures, in turn, address the valid concerns surrounding national safety and ensure that immigration unfolds within a controlled framework. Sustainability calls for policies that stand the test of time, sidestepping impulsive reactions and fostering a system that adapts to the evolving needs of society.

It is not about erasing borders but rather about creating a system that leverages the strengths of a diverse and dynamic population. While providing government programs that incentivize smart and productive behavior.

In conclusion, the time has come to chart a new course in immigration policy, one that transcends the polarized debates of the past. By adopting a balanced approach that intertwines openness, security, and sustainability, the United States can harness the economic strengths that come with a diverse and dynamic population. This comprehensive reform is not a mere suggestion; it is an imperative for securing a prosperous future for all. Let us move beyond the impasse, embracing new ideas that reflect the values and potential of a nation built and sustained by the contributions of immigrants. In doing so, we pave the way for a brighter future for the United States of America, and those to live here.



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