

Reverse immigration coming?

Is the promise of America fading? Do we still have what it takes to push forward and despite our differences to actually MAKE a difference in our own futures? The scales may be tipping, moving away from immigration from first world countries with highly qualified (read: educated and skilled) persons who possess the abilities to make America even greater to immigration solely from third world countries? OR are we going to experience a next step, a *reverse migration*, of many of our best and brightest AWAY from our shores?

To partially answer that question we should look at the exodus of citizens moving from states that overtax, overregulate and regard the legislative process as a way to socially engineer OUT competitiveness and innovation. That exodus is now heading for the few remaining states that hold out the promise of lean and responsive government that LISTENS to its residents and values the free and open exchange of ideas.

You might say that I'm exaggerating, that states like California, New York, Oregon and Washington, to name but a few, are just going through a natural 'evolution' where majority opinion flourishes and that that condition is perfectly in line with 'Americanism.' The problem is that the majority opinion I'm speaking of is Progressive opinion, one that leaves little or no room for dissenting voices. We see it happening among the tech giants of Silicon Valley with censorship, with de-platforming on social media, in corporate boardrooms with diversity quotas/requirements, in universities with limitations on free speech, and it is motivating people to pack up and move out in larger and larger numbers.

States like Florida, Texas, Tennessee and others are seeing a steady and increasing influx of 'expats' from those Progressive-dominated states. I'm told that it's hard to even find a U-Haul trailer in California, for example, and that massive numbers of homes are on the market there. Republican-run states are gaining thousands of these new *refugees*. Why? Because they are well-run and because they practice laissez-faire governance that respects the individual's ability to decide what's best for them and their families. Companies, too, are packing up the water cooler and re-locating to more tax-friendly sites. Tesla is one of them (to Texas) and many more are contemplating drawing down their workforces and moving the rest where they feel freer and more welcome.

The U.S. is rapidly becoming a 'them and us' country where Conservatives are voting with their feet. I can't say as I blame them. They see the danger in waiting too long. If they miscalculate, they will be set upon by higher property taxes to make up the massive budgetary shortfalls that are coming and that will result in a glut of homes on the market - homes that will carry enormous price tags and be in keen competition for fewer and fewer interested buyers. It's no secret that many communities in California have large unfunded liabilities, stemming from sky-high municipal pensions and no prospect of funding them without major tax increases. The economic 'pie' cannot be carved up into smaller pieces and the only way out for these communities is to further burden the taxpayer. That's simple math...and politics.

This relocation trend is not confined to domestic moves. I am still in touch with many American families that have the option to apply for citizenships to other countries. In recent conversations I've had, several people have asked me how difficult it is to obtain German citizenship, for example. The reason they ask me is that I lived in Germany for four years, and after moving back to the U.S. I was the Honorary Consul for the Federal Republic of Germany here in New Mexico for seven years. I've also been asked about Scandinavia and in particular about Denmark where I lived for nearly twelve years. In those conversations I asked them the question, 'why?' I was told that "things are going downhill in the U.S. and that we're looking for more security and more stability." Surprisingly, many of them stated they were also looking for more personal freedom! This shocked me as I was always under the impression that WE were THE country that offered more of all three.

It turns out that several of these people were becoming disenchanted with America and felt that the grass of Europe might be greener for them. A fair number of the questioners were retirees - a group that usually stays put after retirement in order to be near family and friends, grandchildren and comfortable surroundings. These are not folks with a pent-up wanderlust or burning desire to explore new worlds or start fresh in a strange land. It takes a lot to push this demographic out beyond its own borders and comfort zone, but I have the feeling that a fair number of them have reached that point - and at a time when the Coronavirus is rampant! Who would have thought it?

I must admit that I, too, have been thinking along the same lines after living in New Mexico for the last seventeen years since my retirement from the Foreign Service. For twenty plus years prior to that time, I pulled up stakes every four years or so to relocate to a new country. After a while, I became used to the idea as it was a consequence of my employment as a U.S. diplomat. But in 2004, I was grateful to be putting down roots in a very beautiful part of the country and looked forward to reacquainting myself with my landsmen. I returned when George Bush was President and felt that 'my America' was not that different from the one I left in 1984.

I was right, but also wrong. I hadn't factored in the political animosity the Left had for the Right and that had changed things, markedly. Barack Obama upset the political applecart and embarked on re-making America into an image that I felt was foreign to me. For eight long years, millions of us suffered under a massive social engineering push which was accompanied by an economic 're-alignment' that left us millions of jobs poorer and plunged us into a chronic malaise. I told myself that the pendulum was bound to swing back and that I shouldn't despair. It did, and I was elated that finally America would be under new management - real honest-to-goodness management - by someone with EXPERIENCE in the real world of business and that he would bring common sense back to our domestic and foreign policy.

Granted, the new President wasn't everything I had hoped for, but he did tell us what he would do and he did it. Promises made, promises kept. I felt that we were on the right track. Unemployment was falling and we were being respected in the world by our adversaries. We had regained our optimism and our self-confidence. We were going to make it. I was convinced that my decision to spend my remaining years in my own country was the right one. 'America first' translated into 'us first' and trickled down to 'me first.' I knew that I could handle whatever my Democrat-dominated state government threw at me because the federal government was charting the BIG course, the right course.

Then came November 3rd. My hopes for a continuation of sound defensible policies were dashed, and during these ensuing months I have seen how vicious American politics has become and that the Left's abject hatred for 'my side' has exceeded anything that I could have imagined. So, I'm thinking that the next four years of my life might be some of the most important ones inasmuch as I am coming down the 'home stretch' and wondering if I want to spend them watching while the Left systematically removes every reason for staying here. It will take a lot for me to pull up stakes and leave. I don't look forward to that possibility, but I am steeling myself to that option and the realization that *my America* is no longer attainable and has become nothing more than a fleeting memory of better times.

Stephan Helgesen is a retired career U.S. diplomat who lived and worked in 30 countries for 25 years during the Reagan, G.H.W. Bush, Clinton, and G.W. Bush Administrations. He is the author of ten books, four of which are on American politics and has written over 1,100 articles on politics, economics and social trends. He operates a political news story aggregator website, www.projectpushback.com. He can be reached at: stephan@stephanhelgesen.com