

## **Immigration Revisited**

*by Shannon Warren for The Journal Record, February 2017*

Last week's immigration ban has sparked a great deal of controversy. Everyone agrees with the need for safety and the government's duty to protect its citizens, but are we taking the most prudent, virtuous approach?

Basic cornerstones of ethical decision-making include respect for others, seeking truth and appreciating the impact our actions have on *all* stakeholders. With that in mind, the approach to immigration in this country should be thoughtfully revisited and business leaders must be a driving force in that initiative.

Population growth in the U.S. is declining while our workforce is aging. Immigrants can help sustain our economy through renewed human capital and innovation, especially in the fields of science and technology. Using Japan's example, a 2016 *Forbes* report showed how their problems of a labor shortage combined with an aging workforce parallels that of the U.S. They have suffered "decades of deflation" as opposed to the trillions that immigrants or their children have contributed to our economy.

Many major brands like General Electric and McDonalds are founded by immigrants or children of immigrants. Add to that list, Steve Jobs of Apple, whose Syrian father would have been turned away under current policy. Or, eBay's Iranian founder, whose parents arrived at a time when tensions were high.

The impact of a poorly conceived immigration policy has unintended negative consequences. Besides the humanitarian aspect of abandoning children in war-torn nations, hostile politics can chill interest by highly educated and skilled workers. According to research cited by Richard Florida in a 2016 article published in *The Atlantic*, other countries such as Canada, Great Britain and Mexico are surpassing the U.S. in recruiting these desirable workers essential to our increasingly competitive global economy.

Complicating matters is the bureaucratic, inefficient immigration vetting process instituted by the INS. It can take as much as two years for someone to gain legal status for employment here. Families are separated during that time and valued workers leave the U.S. out of sheer frustration. Businesses, especially tech companies, cannot wait that long. We require a more efficient and humane approach.

It is no wonder that venture capitalists are joining community and religious leaders in insisting on a more thoughtful approach to immigration. Current methods threaten our nation's principles of discernment, inclusion and grace. In turn, this ultimately undermines prosperity. Leaders must insist on a bi-partisan, balanced approach to immigration.

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