

OPINION & COMMENTARY

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Kudos

Final Four weekend is far from over, but it's not too early to thank the hundreds of volunteers who donated time and enthusiasm to help Indianapolis host the games and related events.

Outrage

Indiana taxpayers spent \$2,141 on each of 10 hand-made rocking chairs at Madison State Hospital. During this year's State of the State address, Gov. Mitch Daniels flagged the chairs as an example of wasteful spending in past years. The state posted the chairs for sale on eBay last week. Minimum bid: \$999.

Overheard



"Unfortunately, the improvements in Indiana's performance have been minimal at best."

Kevin Brinegar, president of the Indiana Chamber of Commerce, referring to the condition of the state's economy. Indiana earned a C-minus in the chamber's latest report card on the economy.

Realities about immigration

Let's integrate undocumented workers

A fiery debate erupted last week over reforming the nation's broken immigration system. One side contends that illegal immigrants crossing the Mexican border are stealing American jobs, overwhelming welfare rolls and draining the economy, including Indiana's. Others argue that illegal immigration is a reflection of the nation's economic and social strength.

The Star Editorial Board offers explanations as to why undocumented workers should be integrated into American society.

How many illegal immigrants are there?

The consensus is that illegal immigration is one reason why Indiana's foreign-born population has grown 152 percent since 1990. How many have come? As University of Indianapolis Professor Charles Guthrie admits, "Nobody really knows."

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 69 percent of the state's foreign-born population in 2004 — or 164,000 people — weren't citizens. Yet that group includes permanent residents, visa holders and others who came here legally.

Jeffrey Passel, of the Pew Hispanic Center, estimates that 65,000 illegal immigrants resided in Indiana in 2005, a six-fold increase since 1990. But the number is extrapolated from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey of households, which may undercount the number of illegals.

As many as 12 million illegal immigrants could be residing in the United States, as many as 40 percent of them originally arriving here legally as tourists or students, but overstaying their welcome. The rest — more than half of them Mexicans — migrated from the border for carpet mills in Georgia and farms and meatpacking plants in Indiana.

The uncertainty exemplifies why overhauling the way America deals with immigration is essential.

But aren't there too many of them?

If Passel is right, just 1 percent of Indiana's 6 million residents are illegal immigrants, slightly more than the estimated percentage of naturalized citizens.

Compare the size of today's foreign-born population to that of 1920, just after the nation's last immigration boom, and it's clear the impact is far smaller than many think.

Foreign-born residents made up just 3.9 percent of the state's population in 2005, according to the Census Bureau, versus 5 percent of the population in 1920. Nationwide, immigrants accounted for 12 percent of the population in 2005 versus 13 percent in 1920.

Aren't they taking Hoosier jobs?

Given that illegal immigrants likely make up just 5 percent of the nation's



A MESSAGE FOR BUSH: Dozens of Latinos lined the sidewalk along Alabama Street during President Bush's March 24 visit to Indianapolis to protest proposed legislation that would make assisting illegal immigrant workers a federal crime.

workers — and probably an even smaller share of Indiana's — they aren't a sizeable presence in the overall work force. At the same time, their impact can be felt in such sectors as hospitality, meatpacking and construction.

One-fifth of all cooking jobs in restaurants and hotels are held by undocumented workers, as are 23 percent of dishwashing jobs and 17 percent of food-preparation staff. They account for 27 percent of the nation's butchers and other meatpacking workers and fill more than a quarter of all drywall-related construction jobs.

Their high labor participation rate — nearly 90 percent of Indiana's Latinos are in the work force — makes them prized workers in low-end jobs.

But their illegal status also makes them prey to poor working conditions and getting short-changed by less-scrupulous employers. Once again, it's why immigration laws must be reformed.

What about the welfare rolls?

As La Plaza Executive Director Miriam Acevedo Davis points out, their status as illegal aliens — meaning they cannot acquire a Social Security number without committing identity theft — means they can't access most federal or state welfare programs. Just 1 per-

cent of illegal immigrants make up Indiana's 789,000 current Medicaid enrollees, according to the Family and Social Services Administration. Those who are on welfare rolls are either expectant mothers or qualify through their children, who receive aid if they are born here.

Where illegal immigration does impose government costs is on schools. But as Passel notes, improving immigrants' educational destinies means they will become the middle-class citizens at the heart of Hoosier — and American — society.

Why don't they emigrate legally?

Much of the problem is a legacy of America's immigration laws, which have evolved from 19th-century efforts to curtail Chinese emigration into a dysfunctional system of ethnic- and skill-based quotas.

It can take as long as 20 years for an emigré to gain status as a permanent resident, depending on whether he is from Cuba or the Philippines or whether she is being sponsored by a spouse or a brother.

Employer-sponsored emigrés, especially those in high-tech fields and migrant farm workers, also are in for a long wait. This fiscal year's quota of

five-year H-1B visas for skilled professionals, of which 65,000 are issued annually, were filled by last August, according to Barnes & Thornburg partner Mariana Richmond.

Most migrants aren't likely to have immediate relatives who are citizens or employers to sponsor them. At the same time, their desire to escape destitution, along with industry's need for those workers, has created a vicious cycle. Overhauling immigration laws to reflect market and social realities, especially by offering guest-worker programs, makes sense.

So why the fear?

Passel notes that immigration concerns often coincide with economic and social changes. The last major wave of immigration, which led to an influx of Russian émigrés, culminated in the nation's first round of quotas in 1921. It's no different this time, although the typical migrant is either Latino or Asian instead of the European of the past.

It's time to acknowledge that the best way to deal with immigration isn't through fear, but accepting reality and the nation's long-proven ability to assimilate immigrants into the nation's — and Indiana's — social fabric.



RUSS PULLIAM

Continent cries out for America's help

It's a long way from Indiana to Malawi in southern Africa. But political activist Curt Smith hopes to interest his Hoosier friends in this nation of 12 million.

Malawi, west of Mozambique and north of South Africa, does not attract much attention. It has not suffered the massive famines of Ethiopia or the cruel civil wars devastating countries such as Liberia, Sudan or Rwanda.

Yet Malawi is one of the poorest countries on a continent of poverty. Smith, Indiana Family Institute president, was introduced to Malawi through James Mbowe Nyondo. By birth, Nyondo is a prince of the Lamban tribe of Malawi.

Nyondo, who recently earned a business degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio, visited Indianapolis last week. His American friends are helping him form the Malawi Forward Institute. The idea is to encourage a servant approach to leadership, in a country used to authoritarian, top-down leadership.

Malawi has had multiparty elections in recent years, after independence from Great Britain in 1964. But the corruption among government officials has stymied Western investment.

Nyondo hopes his own story can help his nation. One of 11 children, he was raised by his parents to lead his tribe out of poverty. His father named him Mbowe after a king who ruled over the region. He was trained in the family religion of ancestral spirits and witchcraft. In elementary school he dreamed of ridding the country of missionaries and black Christians. He and friends started a group, Enemies of Jesus Christ. "The culprits... were white people from a distant land," he writes in his autobiography. "They had taken our lands, destroyed our traditions and taken away our freedoms."

Yet when he went to Chancellor College in Malawi, his stereotypes were shattered by an African Christian, Gomezgeka Mkandawire, and an American white Christian, Dick Day. "Gomezgeka Mkandawire and Dick Day were the first truly humble Christians I met, and that made their master attractive to me," he writes.

After his conversion to Christ he got more education in South Africa, where he ran into racial prejudice but also saw black and white Christians practicing what Americans call diversity or racial reconciliation.

At this year's National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, Irish rock star Bono pleaded for help for Africa in the morning and Nyondo gave a similar plea to a large audience in the evening.

Nyondo does not follow politically correct views. He contends that personal character in leaders is as important as eloquence and vision. "If you are an immoral person sexually, how can you be trusted with state resources?" he says. "You cannot separate public and private life."

From Indiana, Curt Smith is not quite sure where this journey to Africa will take him. A past aide to Sen. Dan Coats, he is an advocate for traditional family values and plans to continue in that calling.

He's joining other Indiana leaders with an interest in Africa. High up on the political ladder, Sen. Richard Lugar sets important African policies in running the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and is the author of the African Growth and Opportunity Act.

Africa has a tendency to swallow up well-intentioned American efforts, or wear down idealists into disillusionment. But leaders such as Lugar and Bono have shown that a mix of compassion and hard-nosed realism can lead to effective contributions to a continent that needs all the help America can offer.

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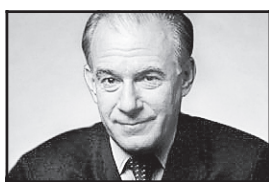
Reporters risk lives to bring real news from Iraq

WASHINGTON — Thursday's release of American journalist Jill Carroll makes this a good moment to celebrate the work that reporters are doing every day in Iraq. They are taking huge personal risks to bring back the news — not "good news," as some supporters of the administration often seem to want, but the news.

Anyone taking potshots at the "mainstream media" should read the description of what it's like to cover Baghdad that appears in the April/May issue of American Journalism Review. The story opens with a description of NPR's Deborah Amos dressed in Arab clothes, anxiously scanning the street for bombers and kidnappers as she heads for an interview in the protected Green Zone. And that's an easy assignment.

Like most resident correspondents, NPR reporters such as Amos live and work in the "Red Zone" — meaning the real Iraq. These reporters are in daily contact, through their Iraqi staffs, with the nightmare the Iraqi people are experiencing. When their reporting contrasts with the more upbeat accounts coming out of the Green Zone, the reporters in the Red Zone generally have been right, and for a simple reason: They are closer to the story.

Jeffrey Gettleman of The New York Times showed what you learn out in the Red Zone in two stories last month



DAVID IGNATIUS

about the spread of gruesome revenge killings: "By conservative counts, nearly 200 civilian men have been executed in the past two weeks and dumped on Baghdad's streets. Many have been hog-tied. Some have had acid splashed on their faces. Others have been found without toes, fingers, eyes." Gettleman, who had been away from Iraq for more than a year, wrote that something fundamental had changed: The violence had "turned inward" into sectarian warfare.

A strong warning about the rise in sectarian violence came from my Washington Post colleague, Ellen Knickmeyer. She reported in February after a revered Shiite mosque in Samarra was destroyed that Shiite militiamen were brutally killing Sunnis. Her sources said Iraqi and international officials tallied more than a thousand bodies. Her reports were criticized by U.S. officials in the Green Zone, who said the number was far smaller. The dispute obscured the

deeper truth that Knickmeyer was reporting — the sharp increase in brutal killings by Shiite death squads. Fortunately that point wasn't lost on U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, who has warned in recent days that America will not support an Iraqi government that doesn't crack down on the Shiite militias.

Western journalists in Baghdad depend increasingly on our Iraqi colleagues, who are some of the bravest reporters in the world. Several of the best Iraqi journalists have created their own blogs. In "24 Steps to Liberty," an Iraqi reporter last Sunday described the living hell of Baghdad's Rabie Street: "Driving in this street after six p.m. makes every thought of killing, kidnapping, insurgents and everything bad become present in your mind. That is what the Iraqis see every night."

Another brave Iraqi reporter, whose blog is called "Treasure of Baghdad," recounted last week a terrifying experience at his home when people opened fire near his house. "I first thought these were the 'men in black' breaking into the houses of my Sunni neighbors trying to kill them, then I thought these might be Sunni insurgents trying to break into the houses of the few Shiite families that live in the same street." His father cocked his rifle to defend the family, but the shooters went away.

American journalists report the successes of U.S. policy, and there have

been some lately, at a level above the mean streets of Baghdad. Iraqi political leaders have been meeting to try to form a national unity government, and the Iraqi army is showing signs of becoming a better fighting force. But there are also some horrific stories: Time magazine published a disturbing account in its March 27 issue about how U.S. Marines are believed to have killed 15 Iraqi civilians in their homes in Haditha last November after a roadside bomb attack. This may prove a shocking tale when more details emerge about what happened, but it's a story that journalists must report.

Supporters of the Bush administration sometimes argue that journalists should report more good news. Certainly we need to tell the stories of the thousands of brave and decent Americans and Iraqis who are trying every day to make the country better. And if an Iraqi unity government can take hold and restore stability, there will be a stampede of reporters to cover this success. But a reporter's job is to tell the truth, even when it hurts. Americans should be grateful that reporters such as Jill Carroll are risking their lives to chronicle this agonizing story — and tell Americans not what they want to hear, but what they need to know.

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