

>> Peter: Welcome to Uncommon Knowledge. I'm Peter Robinson. The executive director for the Center of Immigration Studies, Mark Krikorian, is the author of *The New Case Against Immigration, Both Legal and Illegal*. Mark, thanks for joining me.

>> Mark: Thanks for having me.

>> Peter: *The New Case Against Immigration*. Let me give you the story of immigration as I, and every one of my generation learned it. Seventeenth, eighteenth, early nineteenth centuries, a million, a million and a half people come from northern Europe, establish the republic, give us our fundamental institutions. Late nineteenth to early twentieth century, twenty five to thirty million people come, mostly from southern and eastern Europe, they enrich the nation more. So the story of immigration to the early twentieth century is the story of America. Of course there's the bitter side note of four hundred thousand people who were brought here from Africa who didn't get a chance to build. But overwhelmingly, the story of immigration is a glorious story. And today, I quote *The New Case Against Immigration*, mass immigration is fundamentally incompatible with a modern society. What's changed?

>> Mark: What's not changed is the immigrants. What's changed is us. Because a century ago, or two centuries ago, the people who came here from abroad were actually very similar to those coming here today. They're coming from rural areas, small towns, from countries that were not very developed, and they're the same kinds of people in a sense. They're usually not the poorest of the poor, they're one step up from that, people with a little get up and go. Because it's a big deal even today to you know, leave your country and go somewhere else.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: What's changed though is us. Modernity, over the past century has effected changes that are so fundamental that our entire situation has changed. First of all, we live in a post-industrial knowledge-based economy.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: We now have a welfare state, not even just a welfare state, but a large government sector in all respects. The government now spends a third or more of national income. Schools, roads, everything as well as welfare and such [inaudible]. Communications and transportation technology has shrunk the world, which again is a good thing in a lot of ways, clearly, but makes the equation for assimilation and for security very different from anything in the past. Likewise in modern societies the elites lose a lot of the cultural self confidence necessary that we saw a hundred years ago, that successfully got immigrants to become more like us rather than us like them. And so the point is we've basically outgrown immigration, in a whole variety of ways, and it's something that worked for us before, and it just doesn't work now.

>> Peter: All right, let me push back. A now famous 1984 editorial in the Wall Street Journal, when under Bob Bartley who was editing in those days, the Journal declared that it was pro-immigration, and has remained so ever since. Quote, no growthers cry that we'll never feed, house, or clothe all the immigrants, though the immigrants want to feed, house, and clothe themselves. People are the great resource, and so long as we keep our economy free, more people means more growth, close quote. Now those are the words, actually it was an unsigned editorial, but I assume it was Bob Bartley, whom you and I would consider a great man, a great American, a great journalist in many ways. What's wrong with it though.

>> Mark: It both shoots down a straw man, and itself is simplistic. Bangladesh has way more people than Hong Kong. Clearly that's not all there is to it. Pakistan is a much more populous country than the Netherlands. The simplistic idea of more people is always resulting in more prosperity is wrong, and that's essentially what they're saying. But they're also shooting down a straw man, saying that there's a no growth kind of anti-human element that you know, if you want to limit immigration, that's somehow bad. The fact is immigration is a government program that we need to shape in such a way as that it serves the interest of the United States. When you're taking in, into a modern society like ours, a post-industrial society, nineteenth century immigrants into a twenty first century society, it just doesn't work very well. Now it's not that they're not gonna be able to eat. Obviously, immigrants come here to work, and they do get work, they also increase the size of the economy, there's no question about it.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: They derive though most of the benefit from that increased size of the economy. In other words, they create more economic output, but they almost, they have a bigger piece of the pie, they eat the whole bigger piece of the pie.

>> Peter: Let me just try one, in this opening segment, Steven Moore, Wall Street Journal in 2005, twenty years later, the 1980s and 90s were two of the fastest economic growth decades in American history, in overall and per capita GDP growth, at the very same time that immigration was peaking. Immigrants may not have caused this burst of prosperity, but they certainly didn't prevent it. So the question here is what are you worried about? What ill will befall us because of our present immigration policy?

>> Mark: There's a whole variety of things, but tightly, in economics Steve is right. Immigration did not create that economic boom. But what it did is the benefits for the bottom of our society of that economic boom were later in coming, and lesser precisely because immigrants were coming at the same time. That was a tighter labor market with rapid growth, it's something that's going to happen as part of a labor, as part of a business cycle.

>> Peter: Right. Segment two, the fiscal case against immigration. Again, let me begin by quoting from The New Case Against Immigration. Immigrants create a net burden on government at all levels of between eleven and twenty two billion dollars a year,

swamping the presumed net economic benefit that immigrants create, between one and ten billion per year, close quote. First give me the, that, the second bit of that first, the presumed net economic benefit?

>> Mark: This is from the National Research Council's look at this in the nineties. So the numbers are probably bigger.

>> Peter: '97 as I recall.

>> Mark: Right. It's the same basic concept though. There is a net, a very small net economic benefit caused by immigration. What happens is immigrants push down the wages of lower skilled Americans, and that economic benefit is then spread across the other 90% of society. Essentially, the poor see a 5% drop in their income, everybody else sees a two tenths of a percent increase in their income, their effective earnings. So it's kind of a moral question. Is it right to beggar the poor for the benefit of everybody else? It's a redistributionistic effect, you see what I mean?

>> Peter: Right, right. Okay, now this fiscal burden of between eleven and twenty two billion a year, the net burden on government at all levels of between eleven and twenty two billion a year, explain that.

>> Mark: Immigrants obviously pay taxes. Even the poorest immigrants pay taxes. You know, buy a stick of gum you're paying property –

>> Peter: Sales tax.

>> Mark: Sales tax.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: If you rent a house, you're effectively paying property tax, you know, indirectly.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: So there's, immigrants pay lots of taxes.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: But in a modern society, these are the very kinds of people who are designed to be consumers of tax revenues, of government services, because they are the, they're unskilled people who have families, the working poor with families. Our welfare system is designed to subsidize the working poor with families, and that's a whole separate argument about whether that's a good thing or not, but that's what it is, and we're importing more people for whom our welfare system is precisely designed to subsidize.

>> Peter: Okay, now on that point, a couple points. If they create a net fiscal burden of twenty two billion, and government at all levels spends a third of GDP, government's spending four point five trillion a year, and the net fiscal burden is loose change out of that. A little under 5%, right?

>> Mark: No question.

>> Peter: So that's a tiny amount.

>> Mark: But the economic benefit is even tinier than that. In other words, you can't really make it –

>> Peter: So it's a wash.

>> Mark: It's basically a wash economically, fiscally you can say yes, obviously it's a tiny part, it's a wash. But in particular communities and particular parts of society it's much worse than a wash, do you see what I mean?

>> Peter: Yes, yes, yes.

>> Mark: So yeah, my point is not that because of the economic drain nationwide, or the fiscal drain caused by immigration alone, that's a reason not to have immigration. Cause if there were other reasons to have it, you could say well it's a relatively small price to pay. My point is though it is incompatible with a whole variety of characteristics of modern society, that's one of them.

>> Peter: Okay. Now let's address, there is an underlying moral, I think it's a moral question. Yes it is, I'm sure it's a moral question. You're saying that the bottom quintile, say 20%, the 20% poorest American citizens are disproportionately hurt, and they're actually hurt, that's in absolute terms. They're worse off than they would be –

>> Mark: Yes.

>> Peter: - if we did not have immigration. So the question would be what is the moral argument on which you prefer the well being of the bottom quintile of American citizens, who although they may be worse off are still better off than those poor folks in Mexico. Under what, what is the argument that permits you in good conscience to prefer the well being of these people over the well being, of middle class folks, or working folks in El Paso over the poor folks in [inaudible] Juarez who want to move to El Paso?

>> Mark: It's called patriotism. We have a greater obligation to our fellow Americans than we do to foreigners. That is a moral statement.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: It's not a factual statement in some sense, in other words, you can disagree with that, I mean there are a lot of people who do. The Wall Street Journal I have to say disagrees with that, doesn't see the, what one philosopher calls concentric circles of obligation, where –

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: - you know, your own family is most important to you, your countrymen, and then humanity as a whole. We have to have priorities, and there are going to be those who say impoverishing American poor people a little bit is worth the increase in income, significant increase in income that an immigrant would experience coming from say Central America.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: My answer is no. I mean this is a political question, and my contention is I have a greater obligation to my fellow countrymen than to foreigners. And if we have that debate, I'd love to have it, because the supporters of expanded immigration, and effectively open borders are very seldom gonna be explicit in saying they have no greater obligation to somebody in Bed Sty [assumed spelling] or South Central.

>> Peter: Right, right, but that is central to what's going on here.

>> Mark: It is clearly central to what's going on.

>> Peter: Do you want to take a step further and combine with the moral premise a utilitarian argument? Do you want to say look, over the longer term, for the good of the working poor of Mexico, and indeed for the good of people around the world, there is no greater imperative over the longer term than the health and well being and strength of the United States.

>> Mark: I don't make that argument.

>> Peter: You don't. You don't feel an impulse to do so?

>> Mark: Not necessarily.

>> Peter: All right.

>> Mark: No, I don't.

>> Peter: Okay. You quote Milton Freedman a couple of times. Milton Freedman said quote, it's just obvious that you can't have free immigration and a welfare state, close quote. Now incidentally, in his final years I knew Milton Freedman a little bit, and we discussed immigration. And his view was eliminate the welfare state, and let anybody who wants to come to America come. Would you have permitted that argument?

>> Mark: My response to that is call me when it happens. The fact is the welfare state is in some shape or form, is inherent to modern societies, it's not going away. Now, I'm a conservative, I want it tightened up, I want welfare made less likely to foster dependency, etcetera. I mean I'm on board with all of that stuff.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: It's not going away. A large government sector, and this, we're not talking just welfare, also some kind of you know, old age pension system.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: Whether it's social security or something else, a whole variety of things, those aren't going away. They are part of what we are as a modern society.

>> Peter: Segment three, what are we becoming. Again, The New Case Against Immigration. The combination of two modern traits, transnationalism and multiculturalism means that mass immigration today is much less likely to result in the kind of deep assimilation of the vast majority of immigrants and their children that is necessary for immigration to be successful, close quote. Transnationalism, explain.

>> Mark: Well modern technology means that you can go home for your cousin's wedding, and then come back for work you know, at the end of the, the next week, that you can send your kids you know, back home for a summer with the old, in the old country. You couldn't do that in the old days. You know, obviously you had to take a boat, it could take months, it was expensive. I mean some people did it, but it was much more difficult. What transnationalism really means is the ability of even ordinary people to live with a foot in each country, kind of live in two countries at the same time. And that is, it's not a bad thing to want to maintain your connection with the old country, it's a normal human impulse. But technology forced people to grow where they were planted, or rather to pull up their roots and you know, grow here.

>> Peter: So even somebody who follows the crops, and there are still folks like that from Mexico who follow the crops in the United States, can afford to pop home to Mexico for the weekend on Southwest Airlines.

>> Mark: Well some people obviously, if they're very poor, can't. But I mean there are van services from Atlanta. I mean if you drive in Atlanta you see the ads, van services for the different cities. Yeah, and besides that, telephone calls, and all the rest of it are also part of it, it's communications as well as transportation.

>> Peter: Multiculturalism is the other term.

>> Mark: This is another aspect, a less desirable aspect of modern society, where the elites in modern societies lose the cultural self confidence. My mother went to Medford, Massachusetts public schools, outside Boston, her parents were immigrants.

>> Peter: From Armenia I'm supposing.

>> Mark: Yes, her parents were from the Ottoman empire, Armenia immigrants.

>> Peter: So turn of the century, in the last century.

>> Mark: Yes, exactly.

>> Peter: All right.

>> Mark: They took, she went to school, 1930s, public school, and the implicit deal, my parents, I mean my grandparents bringing my mother to school were saying you teach our daughter what it is to be an American. She memorized the Gettysburg Address, saying hail Columbia, and learned George Washington was the father of our country. This is not what kids are learning in the LA unified school district, or New York public schools, or elsewhere. And it's not because the immigrants were, the immigrant kids are different. It's because they are coming into a very different context where American elites no longer accept the value of our history and our past, and no longer teach it in such a way that would get immigrants to want to be part of it.

>> Peter: All right. Let me, historian David Kennedy, let me quote you. The rates of assimilation measured in various ways, by school degree taking, rates of intermarriage, rates of English language acquisition, all point in the same direction, Mexican immigrants are in fact assimilating at rates comparable with prior groups, close quote. This is an empirically testable proposition, and David Kennedy says well the indications are they're assimilating.

>> Mark: There are some aspects of it that are in fact quantifiable, there's some metrics you can use, like assimilation. I mean like intermarriage for instance, and what have you. But assimilation is more than that. Assimilation isn't just getting a job, learning English, and driving on the right side of the road. It's a kind of psychological or emotional process, where you shift your emotional attachments and your fundamental allegiances from one people to another. And that's the kind of thing that we simply are in a modern society much less able to do, and we create essentially post-American immigrants. We have a post-American elite that is, and again, this isn't all immigrants. Many of them are in fact generally patriotic.

>> Peter: Well what I'm about to say is of course on your argument we're not doing a very good of assimilating our own children.

>> Mark: Sure, but there's a difference here. Our own children have a personal family history in America. Their father may have been in Vietnam.

>> Peter: Okay, no other frame of reference, they are American because they are.

>> Mark: And when they come to the point of thinking about identity, America is what it is there for them. This is I think the you know, reason for this explosion of books on the founders for instance. People are, Americans are looking for –

>> Peter: Scrambling around to get what they don't get in school any more.

>> Mark: Exactly, exactly. Immigrant kids have something else from their parents. It's not natural to cultivate this sense of peoplehood in someone who doesn't naturally have it. It's a much more difficult thing to do, and actually there's survey data that suggests this. I didn't have it when the book came out –

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: - that naturalized Americans have, naturalized citizens have much less attachment to the United States than native born citizens, there's a whole variety of you know, questions that were asked, and they all, they were all very clear in that direction.

>> Peter: And the danger of that is what? You would follow Samuel Huntington's argument, saying that in the southwestern United States, previous waves of immigrants disbursed broadly across the country, and they themselves came from many different professional and linguistic backgrounds. Now for the first time we have a huge number, speaking one language, coming from one country, settling in one place, and we risk the development of a Quebec, a separate society within the United States. Is that your fear?

>> Mark: That's part of it, but only one part of it.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: Because even if Mexican immigration, and even Hispanic immigration overall were a much smaller part of the picture, the kind of you know, sort of post-Americanism among immigrants, their kind of ambivalence about America, living here, but not really being of here, is something that would be the case whether we had massive Hispanic immigration or not. In other words, it's not just tied to that.

>> Peter: Segment four, mark, relax. Let me give you a few of the observations of historian David Kennedy. He's generally skeptical of your point of view, here's an observation. The proportion of foreign born people in the United States is now just under 13%, in 1910 it was 15%. We've been here before, we survived.

>> Mark: That was the peak we'd ever had. So the idea –

>> Peter: True, that's true.

>> Mark: So I mean –

>> Peter: You know your data.

>> Mark: This isn't telling us very much I'd have to say.

>> Peter: Let me just present you with a demographic event here. As recently as the census of 1970, California was 90% White, and largely settled from the interior of the country, so that when Ronald Reagan was governor of California, my hero Ronald Reagan, when he was governor of California, he was effectively governor of Iowa on the Pacific.

>> Mark: Right.

>> Peter: At least as recently as the most recent census, 2000, and probably some time before, California became a minority majority state. That is to say there is no ethnic group that has a majority in California.

>> Mark: Right.

>> Peter: It is now one of four, California, Texas, Hawaii, and New Mexico. But what catastrophe has befallen any of those four states. Texas and California are still enormously buoyant economically, our state government here in Texas, in California is a mess, but that doesn't seem to me to have much to do with immigration, it's well run in Texas by comparison in my opinion. California has moved to the democratic column, Texas is solidly in the republican. What is the, what has happened, what do you begin to see happening when you get huge waves of immigrants?

>> Mark: There's a variety of things, and let me say just your last point about politics is, the first thing you see is an area starts trending democratic. Texas is gonna be a –

>> Peter: Southern Texas.

>> Mark: No, no, no, Texas as a whole is going to become a tossup state, it's gonna become a battleground.

>> Peter: How fast?

>> Mark: I don't know, but soon, not that long from now.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: But there are other effects that are not, I mean let's, I want to talk about this issue of rayconquista [assumed spelling], cause this is sort of the way it's parodied. You know, Mexico's gonna get Texas back, or California, maybe parts of California they could have. But modern society creates a kind of, a different dynamic, a different

phenomenon. The lines on the map are never gonna change. But the power relationships can, and are in fact already changing. And what you see is increasingly the Mexican foreign ministry is becoming a direct local and state level player in American politics. This is a serious erosion of sovereignty that we see first with regard to Mexican immigrants, because they are so concentrated and so numerous. But we're seeing it even with regard to other ethnic groups. And what you're seeing is essentially a loss of sovereignty.

>> Peter: Give me one, we're running out of time in this segment, but give me one example in which you see an erosion, specific example if you can.

>> Mark: Mexican consuls, specifically lobbying state legislatures, and county supervisors to accept the Mexican government's illegal alien ID card for instance, the whole point of which is to make an end run around congress, and create a kind of de facto legal status for illegal aliens.

>> Peter: All right. Here's to me the most arresting observation that David makes. The causes of immigration then and now, this takes a moment to set up, and you know the story well of course. If you look at Europe, nineteenth, late, actually beginning in the late eighteenth century, and trace the development of the Industrial Revolution, it starts in Britain, it goes to the low countries, Germany, Scandinavia, over to the east, down the Italian peninsula. And if you trace immigration to the United States, it follows precisely the same pattern. Industrial Revolution hits, people are uprooted from the countryside, population grows, off they go, many of them to the United States, Australia, in those days Argentina, so forth. And then the population birth rates decline, population stabilizes, and the pressure for immigration essentially evaporates. Mexico is undergoing the same kind of, Mexico and other third world countries, but Mexico is our immediate concern. Population is tripled since 1950, but the birth rate is already beginning to decline, this pressure will recede of its own accord, relax.

>> Mark: Cane has said in the long run we're all dead. And that's actually, you're right that in the long run the solution is modernization of societies that send immigrants.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: But there are a couple of things. It doesn't happen right away. Korea is now, has reached levels of western European development, and yet there's significant immigration continuing from Korea. Mexico, if you look at the fertility rate, the number of babies born to the average woman in Mexico, which is indeed coming down, it's about the same level of ours now.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: As it went down, the Mexican population in the United States went up. So it doesn't necessarily, I'm not talking causation –

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: - but it doesn't, it's not as simple as people think. And also much of immigration is not driven just by modernity. Irish immigration happened because for other reasons, you know, catastrophic famine, this sort of thing, so that there are a variety of things that push immigration. A century from now, maybe Mexico will have its own immigration problem, cause it will be so developed, no one from there will come here, it'll be comparable to Canada say. But that's a century from now, and the question is what happens between now and then. You can't construct government policy based on some long-term idea of development solving the immigration problem.

>> Peter: Okay. Here's another Kennedy observation. A lot of immigrants go home. And we now know, because of studies done toward the end of the twentieth century, when the immigrants who came in the late nineteenth through the early twentieth century had lived out their lives, and you could examine this kind of thing, roughly, a little more than two fifths of immigrants from Europe went home. They went back to Sorrento. Italians, 44% went home, only two groups showed single instead of double digits. One were the Irish, and the country was so dirt poor for so long, they had no place to go back to. And the other were Jews, exactly, who of course had no, their, nowhere to go to, exactly. So the notion here is again, relax a little bit. A lot of the Mexicans want to make some money and then go home.

>> Mark: Let's say first of all that it is just 60% of immigrants who will stay. That's a whole lot of people.

>> Peter: That's a lot of people.

>> Mark: Frankly, number one. Number two, the data for emigration, for going home today is hard to get, because we don't do exit visas and all the rest of it. But it seems to be actually lower than it was in the past. And it's hard to see, it's hard to tell why, but it seems to be the reason is if you can in fact go home for your aunt's wedding, and come back the next week, there isn't the same reason to have to pull up your roots and go back home all over again. In other words, transnationalism may well make return migration less compelling for a lot of immigrants. That's not a good sign in my perspective, because you end up with transnationalism. In other words, you end up with people less committed and less rooted in the United States.

>> Peter: Okay. Now, by the way I think I can add one argument to that, which is to say that if you're in a community in Texas, if you're in certain neighborhoods in El Paso, you don't feel as though you're away from home, right?

>> Mark: Right.

>> Peter: That's another bit of your argument. Okay. Segment five here. What is to be done. Here's what George W. Bush wanted to do. I want to put this one up, let you smack it around, and then we'll go to the Krikorian program. George Bush said we'll let

foreign nationals work in the United States for up to three years, we will create incentives for them to go home, savings accounts that they can't tap into until they return to their country of origin, and we'll create some sort of pathway for those who want to stay here, to demonstrate that they are going to assimilate, before giving them citizenship. Now sweetness and light? Reasonable? A way of getting a handle on the problem? What was wrong with that?

>> Mark: That's a complete fantasy. Guest worker programs, this is the idea that we're gonna have people temporarily come here, and only a tiny number will want to stay. Guest worker programs are a mirage that human societies keep succumbing to over and over again. In fact, the reason we have such a big Mexican immigration problem is because of the last guest worker program, called the Prosero [assumed spelling] program.

>> Peter: Mm-hmm.

>> Mark: And the fifties and early sixties brought a lot of people from west central Mexico into the United States. And those migration networks are still functioning to this day, to this day the states of west central Mexico are disproportionately the source of new illegal immigrants to the United States. Because really –

>> Peter: Immigration becomes a cultural pattern.

>> Mark: Exactly. And nobody thinks about say moving to Mexico –

>> Peter: You're [inaudible] and seeing how to do it, right.

>> Mark: Right, exactly. Becomes a natural thing to do, until it's somehow interrupted. And you know, these are create new artifacts of human policy, of government policy, and they can be interrupted with government policy.

>> Peter: I'm quoting again from The New Case Against Immigration. Attrition through enforcement. The aim is to reduce the number of foreigners sneaking into the country, and increase the number of illegal immigrants already here who go home, close quote. Close quote. How?

>> Mark: A variety of means. Reducing the inflow is, a lot of it is simple, is what people get, you know, border enforcement and the like. But increasing the outflow, getting people to deport themselves, most important effort is turning off the magnet of jobs. The magnet of jobs and the jobs they already have. In other words, get it, make it harder for illegal immigrants to get and keep jobs. Because most illegal immigrants work on the books.

>> Peter: So you want to crack down on every small businessman who runs a hotel or motel or restaurant throughout the entire southwestern United States.

>> Mark: I want to start with bigger firms, because it's the big companies that are employment most of them, easiest place to start. And then you move down the list, yes, absolutely. It needs to become a labor standard that you check for legal status. And there are tools for that. The Homeland Security Department is an online system, it's free. You check social security number, name, date of birth of a new hire, my own center uses it. And it is actually quite effective in screening out illegal workers. That's one part of it.

>> Peter: Okay, now let me put back at you something that you've already asserted yourself. The welfare state is here to stay. Why? Because although you and I may be thorough going conservatives who'd like to shrink the federal government to the size of a flea circus, there's no political will to do that.

>> Mark: People don't want it.

>> Peter: Where do you find the political will? We just went through eight years of a republican governor. A republican, excuse me, republican president, punitively conservative, and he put forward his plan for immigration, you have already said was a complete fantasy. Do you expect better under the Obama administration? Where do you find, how do you construct the political will to do what you're suggesting?

>> Mark: The public will is already there. It's quite demonstrated, unlike say getting rid of the welfare state. There really is a pretty strong public sentiment for more moderate levels of immigration, and better enforcement. We saw it in 2007 when President Bush's and McCain Kennedy amnesty bill was squashed by probably the biggest you know, uprising of public objection to legislation that we've seen in generations. So the question is how do we get the political class to form and implement that public desire, and I don't know, that's a good question. I'm not a lobbyist, but you know, Charles Murray wrote *Losing Ground* twenty years before welfare reform happened. I'm no Charles Murray, but the point of this is to kind of give an intellectual framework for eventually rethinking immigration.

>> Peter: Okay. Once again, this is the second large piece of the Krikorian program. Cut the numbers, *The New Case Against Immigration*, I'm quoting again. The object of this book has been to demonstrate that high levels of immigration are in conflict with the needs of a modern society. So not only illegal immigration, which you want to reduce through attrition, must be reduced, but legal immigration also. To what levels, and how do you do that?

>> Mark: Essentially what we need to do is minimize legal immigration to the degree possible. And because there are other values that we may want to preserve, we may want to let immigrants in, certain immigrants, despite the problems that immigration can create. In other words, a kind of zero based budgeting in immigration, you build up from zero.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: Three, all immigration flows have three components, family, skills, and humanitarian. For family, nuclear family only. Husbands, wives, little kids of U.S. citizens. Anything beyond that I find difficult to rationalize. That's still a lot of people though, that could be three hundred thousand people a year.

>> Peter: Right.

>> Mark: But there's a moral case for that, and a practical case for that. Secondly, skills. I'm happy to have Einstein immigration, your question sort of presumed the idea that our skilled immigrants are in fact Einstein's. That's not that many Einstein's in the world. And having a very high bar for skilled immigration, and letting those people in. Not on some kind of contingent visa, like this H1B visa, but we simply let them in, and they do their thing.

>> Peter: And that is why, because you can actually demonstrate that they add more to the economy than they consume?

>> Mark: Yes, highly skilled people can in fact make significant contributions to the productive capacity of the United States. But when you let in enormous numbers of even skilled people, you create other kinds of problems with regard to assimilation for instance. Because skilled people are much more likely to already have a fully formed national identity, it's harder to get the kind of emotional assimilation that I think –

>> Peter: You'd at least be open to discussing that.

>> Mark: And we have categories for very highly skilled people, it'd be a few people, say twenty five thousand.

>> Peter: All right.

>> Mark: And then humanitarian, refugees, political asylum. And you know, refugees are very costly in a whole variety of ways. I would pick fifty thousand, just because that's what congress thought it was approving when it passed the 1980 Refugee Act. But make sure that these are genuine, not just genuine refugees, but refugees who will never have anywhere else to go, ever, and for whom this is the only option. And there just aren't that many people like that quite frankly.

>> Peter: All right. Mark, final question. Today as we sit here less than a week before the inauguration of President Obama, the number of illegals in the United States is about twelve million, best estimate –

>> Mark: Probably gone down a little, it may actually be more like eleven something -

>> Peter: All right.

>> Mark: - because enforcement has pushed it down.

>> Peter: Okay. At the end of the Obama administration, what will that number be?

>> Mark: That's a good question. It's gonna be higher, given this –

>> Peter: You have no doubt.

>> Mark: Let me project, I'll guess, let's say fourteen million, that may be too high.

>> Peter: So you view your job, during the Obama years, whether they last four or eight, you view your job as keeping the argument alive, protecting the glowing ember, until a political moment comes along when it's possible to act on it.

>> Mark: That's one way to look at it, maybe. But I actually view, rather than glowing on a political ember, I kind of like to see it as spreading a new perspective on immigration, a different way of looking at it so that, so that when we get to a, either a historical situation where rapid change can happen, or a different president, or a different congressional you know, arrangement, we will have the theoretical and principled rationale for the kind of basic changes we need.

>> Peter: Mark Krikorian, author of *The New Case Against Immigration*. Thanks for joining us.

>> Mark: Thank you.

>> Peter: I'm Peter Robinson, for *Uncommon Knowledge*. Thanks for joining us.