

The cost of illegal immigration

Illegal immigrants buy into 'illusion of hope' and only cripple U.S. economy

Somewhere in the arid American Southwest is an imaginary line — clearly evident on a map, but obscure and indistinguishable among the dirt and rocks of the New Mexico or Arizona desert. However vague or lucid the line is, across it straddle two distinct cultures. In the United States, there are freedom and prosperity, which must seem tempting and taunting compared to the despair and desolation found to the south in Mexico. But as thousands of illegal Mexican immigrants slip across the line and venture north, they fail to realize the consequences of unlawfully living and working in the United States — consequences harmful to immigrants and the U.S. economy.

According to the University of Texas, more than 40 percent of Mexicans make \$2 a day in Mexico; in the United States, they can make 20 times that. For thousands, the potential sacrifice in braving the desert is worth it. The Houston Chronicle reports that each year, Mexican immigrants send back half their earnings — an estimated \$200 million — to their families in Mexico. This is money pumped right out of the U.S. economy, and while this money may keep immigrants' families alive, it comes with disastrous fiscal repercussions.

The consequences of illegal immigration have distinctive economic overtones detrimental to the United States. The health care system of Los Angeles County, for example, provides medical services for the poor. According to the Los Angeles Times, 32 percent of its patients are illegal immigrants from Mexico. Millions of U.S. tax dollars are spent each year to take care of adults and children who are not supposed to be in the United States to begin with. This is the price of illegal immigration. The county is strapped for money, yet according to the Times, an immigrant with less than a high school education — this being the majority of these immigrants — drains the economy of \$13,000 during his lifetime. There are an estimated 1.1 million illegal immigrants in L.A. county alone.

What lies at the heart of illegal immigration, however, is the philosophy of the immigrant.



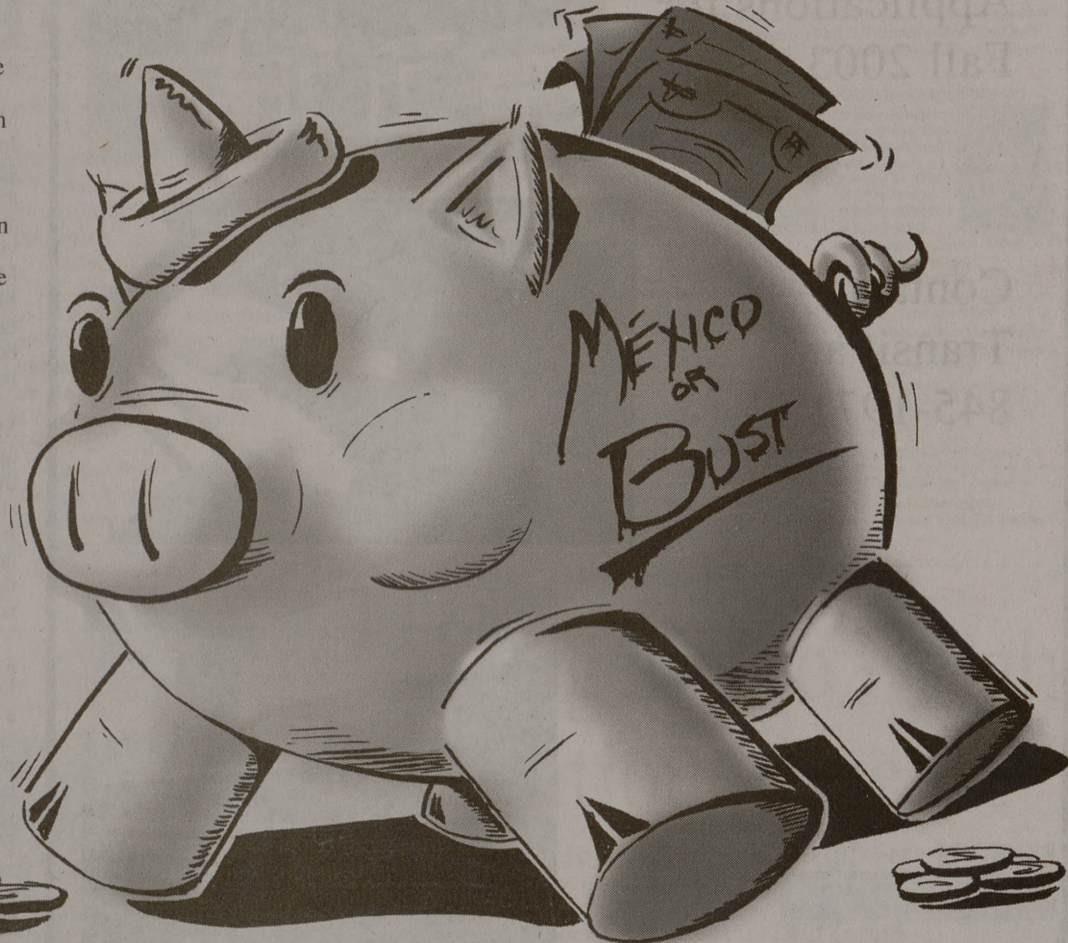
MICHAEL WARD

Unlike legal immigrants who come to the United States each year, illegal immigrants want little part of U.S. culture. The fact is, illegal immigrants want to work in the United States so their families in Mexico can live. They simply exploit the U.S. job market.

There is a sharply divergent mindset between legal and illegal immigrants. Legal immigrants who come to the United States from all over the world (including Mexico), come with one thing in mind — to become a U.S. citizen. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, America saw a great rise of legal immigration. Whole families boarded steamboats to forge new lives as U.S. citizens. They did not shrug off their culture or individuality; rather, they sought to mold a new identity, mingling their home country with the new one. This is not the case with the thousands of illegals who venture into the United States each week simply for profit.

Today, instead of the massive influx of Italians and Irish, the United States sees an increasing number of Mexicans who do the equivalent of what their aforementioned European counterparts did near the turn of the century. The difference, however, is that the Irish and Italians built upon their generations — enabling their families to move up the social and economic hierarchy. They did so out of a desire to incorporate themselves with U.S. culture. Right or wrong, many illegal immigrants from Mexico are failing to mimic this pattern. They only want a paying job and the United States offers this.

While this time bomb of illegal immigration ticks evermore obnoxiously, little political action is taken. Both political parties covet the Hispanic vote. The Democratic Party has no reason to decrease the fervor with which it supports immigration, illegal or otherwise, when it is coupled with a potential increase in Democratic voters. Similarly, the Republican Party seems to believe that its support is growing among Hispanic voters and any move against "their people" would have political



ramifications.

Sadly, illegal immigration perpetually cycles itself. The dependence of the families in Mexico on those in America is crippling. Not only is the family unit broken, but when their labor in the north is exploited to the point of exhaustion, they return home with no savings and no means with which to support themselves.

The imaginary line in the American Southwest presents the illusion of hope. The shining cars in the magazines and the bright

lights that can be seen from their town all scream opportunity. And for those who come legally with the desire to start a new life, it provides an opportunity that is unrivaled by any other nation. However, for the illegal, the desert, with its rocks and dirt, offers a mirage on the horizon and little real future.

Michael Ward is a senior history major. Graphic by Seth Freeman

Keeping beer away from the homeless

Beer for the Homeless charity mocks real social problem, exploits homelessness

"Why lie? I need beer," reads the cardboard sign. The man holding the sign on the Beer for the Homeless Web site's snapshot is obviously homeless, and thanks to the benevolence of the "charity" organization, he has been lifted from obscurity to pronounce his disenfranchised message from the pulpit of the World Wide Web.



LINDSYE FORSON

On its Web site, www.beerforthehomeless.com, BFTH purports to be "dedicated to the thousands of men and women in America who have been relegated to the status of children, regardless of their age, by the do-gooders of society who believe that merely because a person has no home, he should not be allowed to drink beer." Furthermore, BFTH claims its noble endeavor "strikes a blow for equality and human rights." Its entire existence was apparently brought about by other charity organizations' refusal to serve homeless people beer. The group is a shameless mockery of a true charity organization and does more to encourage homelessness than to remedy it.

Recently, the Salvation Army of Sydney criticized BFTH, saying it "added fuel to the fire," according to the Sydney Morning Herald. Gerard Byrne, social program secretary of recovery services with the Salvation Army in Sydney, said of BFTH, "Since drugs and alcohol are a prominent factor in homelessness, providing them with alcohol is morally and ethically questionable." Byrne is right, and hopefully others will not take BFTH seriously.

According to the Web site, BFTH even recruits "beer babes" to help with the delivery. In fact, the entire passage evokes bizarre mental images of scantily clad beer girls scouring the streets for panhandlers in want of a drink. Do homeless people have the right to drink beer on someone else's dime, and if so, are they entitled to be serviced by beer babes? The answer should be a resounding no.

As one reads the organization's description of itself and its goals, he cannot help but wonder if it is spoken in earnest. It is ludicrous to believe that because someone cannot afford to buy beer they are being deprived of their basic human liberties. Beer, liquor, cigarettes and the like are recognized by the government as luxury items and are taxed as such. Does BFTH honestly believe that every citizen is entitled to beer in the same way one is entitled to food and water?

As it is, the would-be charity's true motives go beyond providing every citizen with the right to become intoxicated. Where there's free beer, there's always a catch. On its FAQ Web site page, BFTH concedes that "there is a lot of satire in the presentation of the site, but that's half of the fun."

Apparently, BFTH was founded by two talk radio hosts from Chattanooga, Tenn. In essence, the entire BFTH venture appears to be a publicity stunt for the advancement of a radio show. By their own admission, "half the fun" is mocking a group of people who are easily exploitable and making light of a grievous social problem.

In the least, BFTH is in appallingly bad taste. Tawdry publicity grabs seem to be the modus operandi of radio shows that cannot

get media attention any other way. Like the "Opie and Anthony" radio show which spurred a couple to have sex in a New York cathedral in 2002, BFTH is trading moral decency for a fleeting spot in the limelight and a good laugh at someone else's expense.

But that is its right, just as it is the right of consumers to tune their radios elsewhere. If its transgression stopped at tastelessness, BFTH would be in the company of myriads of other advertisers who use shock value as a sales tactic.

Exacerbating a problem that has already spiraled out of control, however, crosses the line. According to a study done by the Mental Health Coordinating Council, alcoholism is the most prevalent problem of homeless people. The Salvation Army and other charities that aim to help the homeless have legitimate reasons for denying their clients alcohol. By giving free alcohol to alcoholics, BFTH undermines other organizations' sincere attempts at rehabilitation.

BFTH's attitude flies in the face of groups that actually feel the burden of social responsibility for the homeless. Instead of working to remedy the problem, BFTH has chosen to adopt an attitude of irreverent complacency for those who want to drink not because it is an exercise in human rights but because they have a chemical addiction to alcohol. In many cases, alcoholism has driven people onto the streets. BFTH apparently wants to keep them there.

Lindsay Forson is a junior journalism major.

MAIL CALL

Groundbreaking will help bring closure to families

My in-laws headed to College Station for the groundbreaking of the Bonfire Memorial. It's given me cause to reflect on how our lives have changed since Nov. 18, 1999. My husband's little brother, Lucas Kimmel, was killed that morning. Lucas' death was the first loss of a close loved one I had experienced. The depth and complete darkness of the grief surprised me. I had never imagined how very lonely grief is, or how it persists. I resent the way it still burdens our family. I wish it would dry up and blow away, but it doesn't. I think the best a person can hope for is to learn to shift it emotionally from the enemy it is initially to a neutral acquaintance. Grief will always be with me, but it will never be my friend. I'm not in the immediate circle of the "Bonfire Families," but my husband and I are close enough to keep up on the important events and to hear much of what's said. I was a student at TAMU for four years and it hurts me to think that any kind of general animosity toward the University might have developed. I believe that the University, as an institution, also suffered a great loss that deserves our consideration. I'm so ready to move on, and I think the completion of the Bonfire Memorial will be a big step in that direction. I'm ready for our loss to be more personal, and less about that campus five hours away. I'm ready to stop having the wounds reopened every time there's another activity in College Station. I'm ready for appropriate final amends to be made and for our family to be able to see a progression of healing without any more setbacks. My husband and I have many joys in our lives. We'd like to focus on them and put the sorrow of the Bonfire

Collapse behind us for good. Lucas isn't ever coming back, but we've worked to be at peace with that fact. That's what I'm hoping the completion of the Bonfire Memorial will bring to all of us — peace.

Terri Kimmel
Class of 1993

Column on Planned Parenthood inaccurate

In response to Sara Foley's July 17 column:

Staff, volunteers and supporters of Planned Parenthood read with displeasure an opinion article written by Sara Foley and published in The Battalion on July 17, 2003.

It is not that the article was clearly anti-abortion and anti-Planned Parenthood in motivation that was troubling. We were disturbed at the number

of inaccuracies provided by Ms. Foley, and printed by what is reputed to be a professional publication. And the statement that The Battalion contacted our Bryan-College Station clinic and received a "no comment" is simply untrue. Planned Parenthood was not offered the opportunity to respond or to provide our own opinion piece.

The legislation Ms. Foley refers to in her article ultimately seeks to outlaw abortion, which its co-sponsor Tommy Williams (R-The Woodlands) has admitted publicly. Yet a majority (84 percent) of Texans support a woman's right to choose abortion and 76 percent of Texans agree that Planned Parenthood should continue to receive public funding to provide family planning services to low-income women (Scripps Howard Texas Poll, 2002).

In Texas, abortion procedures are not paid for with tax dollars. Abortion counseling is not paid for with tax dollars. Fees for those services are paid for by the client or through private donations.

Emergency contraception prevents unintended pregnancy; it does not terminate an existing pregnancy.

The bottom line is this: Women have a constitutionally guaranteed right to make private decisions about abortion. Legislation that infringes on a woman's right to make those decisions is unconstitutional — just as it is unconstitutional to infringe on a person's right to speak freely, practice religion or bear arms.

We are also disappointed that The Battalion ran an opinion piece that offered such inaccurate information.

Peter J. Durkin, President & CEO, Planned Parenthood

Debbie McCall, Community Services Director

Dyann Santos, Bryan Clinic Director

Editor's note: Planned Parenthood did not return several phone calls to The Battalion before the column was written.