

## OUR VIEW

# Free Country

Few issues stoke American passions more than immigration. Nearly everyone has an opinion—good or bad, but rarely indifferent. It's an issue where most folks have a dog in the fight, which makes navigating it tricky.

Perhaps the debate should start with this inalienable premise: modern America is an immigrant country, created by, for and built on the backs of foreigners. Modern America was colonized and industrialized by European immigrants, sustained, then, by slaves from Africa (brought over against their will, yes, but immigrants nonetheless) and sustained, now, by immigrants primarily from the Latin and Hispanic Diaspora as well as migrants from all over the world. So it would make little sense for a country with immigrant roots and whose strength derives in part from this ethnic amalgam—look at the penetration of minorities in the U.S. Armed Forces, in local and state elected offices, in small business entrepreneurship—to close the door on newcomers.

Reasonable people can agree that immigration can be and, in many cases is, beneficial. Countless are the tales of immigrants from countries mired in squalor or civil strife escaping to America and succeeding—starting businesses, sending their children to college, paying taxes. Entire industries, such as hospitality—which drives our economy—rely on immigrant labor. For some newcomers, low-wage and low-skill jobs (ones that many of us say are “beneath” us) are godsend, 360-degree improvements from the lives they left.

Arguing that immigration strains resources presumes that everyone migrates here doesn't, in turn, pay their way. If a woman comes here from, say, El Salvador, gets a job and pays taxes, then how is she a strain on the economy? The taxes you pay toward educating your kids, she also pays. The taxes you pay for supporting English-as-a-second-language instruction for her kids, she also pays. None other than former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said in a January 2000 speech that easing immigration rules would benefit the U.S. economy. A widely cited study, “A Fiscal Portrait of the Newest Americans” concluded that immigrants annually contribute \$10 billion to the economy, paid \$133 billion in taxes in 1997 and, over the next generation, will pump \$500 billion into Social Security system.

It'd seem that immigration is a slam-dunk, win-win scenario. That is until you factor in immigration policy. Sure, the U.S. economy depends on the immigrant worker, but more than a few unscrupulous employers exacerbate the illegal immigration problem by helping migrants get into the country to work then doing little or nothing to facilitate the acquisition of legal resident status. Passage of wrongheaded laws like the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), skittishness caused by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks, the Republican party's triune dominance in government and a rise in border vigilantism has both alienated Mexico—one the main conduits for immigrants—and turned immigration into life and death.

The fairness of whatever immigration legislation Capitol Hill lawmakers back must take into account fairness for all immigrants. The rules shouldn't be couched in legalese and shouldn't be tailor made to address the concerns of one group. Immigrants from Mexico might comprise the highest contingent of illegals crossing the border, but they shouldn't be given any more rights than folks usurping the U.S.-Canadian border or those gaining entry via ports or by airplane.

Perhaps as a model, Congress can use tenets of 1998's Haitian Refugee Immigration Fairness Act, which established procedures for eligible Haitians to file for lawful permanent resident status, or those of Democratic Texas Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee's 2004 Comprehensive Immigration Fairness Reform Act—it didn't pass—which sought to “amend the Immigration and Nationality Act to reunify families, permit earned access to permanent resident status, provide protection against unfair immigration-related employment practices, reform the diversity visa program, provide adjustment of status for Haitians and Liberian nationals, and for other purposes.”

Immigration is here to stay. Fairness should be, too.



## God: For or against Him?

By Dora LaGrande  
Sentinel-Voice

This article is not intended to debase, offend or pass judgment on anyone; it is simply aimed at trying to get us to take a look at who and what we are in Christ (for those of us that profess Christianity), and to see if our conduct, our character and our conversations line up with the word of God.

Over the past three weeks, out of the clear blue, at least four people called me to ask, “How can people call themselves Christians and just do whatever they want to do, say whatever they want to say, and act however they want to act and think they are serving God?” So I am going to try to shed a little light and, also, try to encourage believers and non-believers.

According to “The Church Report,” a magazine that provides data analysis and other information for America's churches, African-Americans are one of the most religious groups in America and overwhelmingly refer to themselves as “born again.” The report also cites that African-Americans attend church more frequently and are more committed to their churches than any other group of people.

Based on these statistics, why do we Christians — but more specifically, we Black Christians — live lives that don't necessarily reflect the commitment that we have made to God?

Why do we frequent



### ON THE RECORD

By Dora LaGrande

churches every Sunday then on Monday proceed to act like we are “of the world and not in the world,” when we are called to be the “salt of the earth” (to live differently and responsibly to bring glory to God) as believers in Matthew 5:13?

Why do we not believe that when the Bible says that the Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever, that in 2006 He has changed His mind about what and how we are supposed to live and conduct ourselves?

Why do we believe that we can just do what makes us feel good instead of what we as Christians are called to do?

Why do we believe that there are no absolute standards and that the life we live is a free-for-all?

Why do we not believe that when the first chapter of Romans tells us that “when we know God but glorify Him not as God and become vain in our own imaginations and ways that He will darken our foolish heart and ultimately turn us over to a reprobate (depraved) mind” that He will do just that?

To state it very simply: We don't believe because of compromise, the compromise of the church. Devotion

to Jesus has and will always be a large part of the Black experience. The Black church has been and continues to be a powerful force in the African-American community, and it truly has the ability to change the landscape of America. But does it have the will? — the will to deal with issues affecting America and African-Americans today.

Now, pastors have a difficult task. They have to reconcile the interpretations of the Bible with their understanding of human needs. They have to dumb down the infinity of God and put human beings into the middle of it in a way such that their core moral values are lined up with what the Bible says is God's will. Not an easy

task but one that is attainable through Christ, who has assured them they can do all things.

Attainable if that is the desire and the will. I have heard several pastors say, I am not going to deal with an issue just because it's an issue. On the surface, it appears that pastors are more interested in collecting money for the building fund, being popular with their congregation, spouting off about how they have the largest church in the city or the best choir in the city than they are about saving souls. None of which has anything to do with serving God.

They are reluctant to deal with issues such as fornication, abortion, lying, homosexuality, covetousness, etc. — issues that are eating at and destroying the very core of our community — issues that are going to cause people who go to church every Sunday not to be able to go to Heaven.

(See LaGrande, Page 11)

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**Contributing Writers:**  
Asmeret Asghedom  
Chelsi Cheatom  
Tanya Flanagan  
Tasha Pope  
Lés Pierres Streater  
**Photographer:**  
Isaac Sawyer

**Ramon Savoy, Publisher, Editor-in-Chief**  
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