

Culturist Immigration Policy: It's "Who We Are"

by John K. Press (January 2016)

President Obama and the United States Congress are now fighting over whether or not to restrict the Syrian refugees the President wants to bring into the nation. To those who wish to differentiate between religions or cultural groups in immigration policy, Obama said, "That's shameful. That's not American. That's not who we are."

Yet, prior to 1965, our immigration policy history had always been culturist. Our policies assumed we have a particular traditional majority culture – a Protestant one – and a right as well as a duty to protect and promote it. This article will describe our culturist immigration policy history in order to help us to understand the nature of our traditional culturist reasoning and policies. Not incidentally, it will also challenge Obama's characterization of "who we are."

The Puritans were very discriminatory and very culturist. And, herein there is a big misunderstanding. People say the Puritans came to the U.S. for religious freedom. That is a dangerous half-truth. The Puritans came here for their freedom to be stricter and more exclusive than any Christian group ever before. They only allowed Puritans into their areas and ostracized people who minutely diverged from their dogma. Their policies were very culturist; they acknowledged that they had a traditional majority culture and worked to protect it.

I am not, for now, saying these culturist policies are right or wrong. My point is, rather, Obama's saying our tradition does not sanction religious or cultural discrimination is just plain not true. American has long been described as a Puritan nation. And, the Puritans were strict culturists: they fiercely protected their culture.

The Federalist Papers were essential in passing our Constitution and so in founding the United States. In a famous passage, The Federalist Papers claimed that it was natural we should become a nation because we are, "a people descended from the same ancestors, speaking the same language, professing the

same religion, attached to the same principles of government, very similar in their manners and customs.”[\[1\]](#) This very strongly counters Obama’s multicultural / globalist idea that America is founded upon love of diversity and open borders. Rather than un-American, valuing our homogeneity and the resulting unity were at the heart of our founding.

Just after the Constitution was adopted, Congress passed the Naturalization Act of 1790. This law limited [naturalization](#) to immigrants who were “free white persons of good character.” A question, “Was this racist or culturist?” It was definitely racist. But I would argue that the reasoning was largely culturist. When the Act was amended in 1795 and 1798, the change focused on adding proof of good character. At the time, apart from Blacks and Indians, the population was overwhelmingly White. It was assumed that only Whites could be citizens. The focus was, as the Federalist Papers argued, on fitting in to our culture.

Benjamin Franklin’s attitudes provide an illustration of the preceding argument. He wanted to limit German immigration and disperse the Germans who were here. This was not due to their race; they were White. It was because the German immigrants were lacking in a liberal political tradition, the English language, and English culture. And, Franklin thought having large enclaves of German speakers would cause division and discord in our nation. Like the Federalist Papers, he understood the importance of having a culturally unified population. Franklin valued our unity and cohesion more than cultural diversity. Our Founding Fathers were largely culturist.[\[2\]](#)

Next, I wish to look at the Chinese exclusion act of 1882. Was this racist? Yes. It discriminated against Chinese. But it was also culturist. The Act was upheld by the Supreme Court in *Chae Chan Ping versus the US*, because the Chinese were “residing apart by themselves, and adhering to the customs and usages of their own country.” This is a culturist consideration. Interestingly, the Supreme Court also noted that diversity was causing a lot of rioting between the Chinese and Whites. Without noting whose fault the riots were, the Supreme Court argued that citizens’ right to domestic peace was more important than foreigners desire to move to the US. Avoiding such rioting, the court held, was “essential to the peace of the community on the Pacific coast and possibly to the preservation of our civilization there.”[\[3\]](#)

Two decades later, the Immigration Act of 1903 made immigrants excludable on

political grounds for the first time by excluding anarchists. At the time, radicals were terrorizing the nation. In the infamous Haymarket Affair of 1886, a bomb killed seven people and injured over sixty. And, in 1901, an anarchist assassinated President William McKinley. The 1903 Act excluded potential immigrants because they might adhere to a destabilizing philosophy. Obama's saying excluding those who might do us harm is 'Un-American' is not true. Taking such precautions is a tradition.

A series of laws between the 1903 Immigration Act and the 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act, kept the exclusion against anarchists and introduced new grounds for restricting immigration. Among these were: Illiteracy, ill health, and the likelihood to become a public charge, (to go on welfare). We have long used our immigration laws to protect our population and maintain cultural standards. We have long considered whether or not immigrants would add to or detract from our cultural and physical health. This is not irrational. It demonstrates caring for our nation.

The 1921 law, enhanced by the 1924 Johnson Reed Immigration Act, was the most consequential Federal immigration law ever passed. It largely stopped immigration until the 1965 Immigration Act. The 1921 Law strongly limited immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe. That is, it strongly limited immigration of Catholics and Jews. This law was, again, culturist, not racist. It only impacted White people. It noted that our culture was Protestant and aimed to keep it that way. And, I am not saying the law was right or wrong; but, again, as this was the largest immigration in our history, to say that discriminating on religious grounds is un-American, is simply not true.

Culturist reasoning was, in fact, so heavily ingrained in our American identity that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt even refused to allow Jewish refugees fleeing Hitler to enter our nation. And in the 1950s President Eisenhower deported over a million Mexicans in his "Operation Wetback." These attitudes only started to be undermined when Ted Kennedy sponsored the 1965 Immigration Act.

The 1965 Act brought in the multicultural ethos that we have no core culture. It did this by removing our traditional Eurocentric immigration policies in favor of a global diversity model. If you wish to know what is American, I would argue, you would look at the expanse of our history, from the Puritans until

1965. People prior to this time were not un-American. Eisenhower and Franklin define America. They are at least as American as Ted Kennedy.

Now President Obama might admit, that America used to be culturist. But, he might then argue, American history has taught us to have more and more tolerance. In the past we were culturist and unenlightened and now we're multicultural, globalist and enlightened. But, this arrogant, progressive argument assumes that the Puritans, Founding Fathers, Supreme Court and Eisenhower were all less aware of social realities and dynamics than present day Americans. By insulting our Founding Fathers, this argument lowers our national self-esteem.

As a culturist, I say our culturist history is the key to our having been united, safe and prosperous. Our tradition of culturism is the reason we are the United States of America and not the Divided States of America. The Americans who came before us were smart to be culturist. As terrorist upon terrorist acts show, multiculturalism's ignoring of cultural diversity and cultural dynamics is not intelligent. Ignoring culture in policy makes poor policy because cultural diversity is real. To continue to succeed, America must take pride in our culturist heritage. We must limit immigration and return to our tradition of culturist education by promoting assimilation.

And, on this theme, I would encourage culturists in other western nations to investigate and take pride in their culturist heritage. France can boast of Cardinal Richelieu, the founder of the French Academy. Germany has Johann Gottfried Herder, theorist of Volksgeist, of whom to be proud. Britain can boast of the very first person called a "culturist," Matthew Arnold. Your national holidays are culturist celebrations that need explication and emphasis. Western historians should be culturist and oppose the idea that the West has always been globalist and multicultural, by defining and promoting our traditional western cultures and their heroes.

Lastly, to help win arguments against Obama and the Left, concerning our American identity, I want to point out an inconsistency in their argument. They tell you with one breath that our nation is defined by open borders and not discriminating; then, in the next breath, they tell you that ours has always been racist and discriminatory. The Left's inconsistency here is a weakness we can attack them with. It does not take much pushing to get them to call the

United States “racist.” This contradicts their assertion that the United States is defined by our tolerance and openness.

And once we get them to call our nation racist, not multiculturalist, we can correct them. We can tell them that we’ve always been culturist! The history above supports this assertion. And, then we can go on the offensive by asking them if cultural diversity is real. If they answer ““Yes,” we have won the argument. If cultural diversity is real, being culturist is rational and smart. Once admitted, they will try to backpedal and say cultural diversity is ephemeral. We can then discuss the realities of *jihad*, differing levels of interest in education and Female Genital Mutilation. They will attempt to switch the topic to racism. Remind them that we are talking about culture and that “cultural diversity is real.” With this tactic we can once again take pride in our forefathers and our history of culturist immigration policy.

[1] Jay, John, Hamilton, Alexander, Madison, James, *The Federalist Papers*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2004), 9

[2] Franklin, Benjamin, *Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind*, (Boston: S. Kneeland, 1755).

[3] U.S. Supreme Court, *The Chinese Exclusion Case*, 130 U.S. 581 (1889), *The Chinese Exclusion Case*, No. 1448, Argued March 28-29, 1889, Decided May 13, 1889, 130 U.S. 581

John K. Press, Ph.D., teaches at a university in South Korea. He is the author of the book, *Culturism: A Word, A Value, Our Future*. More information can be found at www.culturism.us.

To comment on this article, please click