

American Renaissance

There is not a truth existing which I fear or would wish unknown to the whole world.

— Thomas Jefferson

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The Green Card Crap Shoot

Luck is the only qualification for these immigrants.

by Stephen Webster

Every year millions of foreigners from nearly every country on earth play the lottery—the Green Card lottery—hoping to win permanent residency in the United States. The lottery, officially known as the Diversity Visa Lottery Program, gives a shot at becoming legal immigrants to 50,000 foreigners who have no special skills and no family in the US.

Family ties became the easiest legal way into the United States, thanks to the 1965 Immigration Act. In 2002, for example, the US admitted 1,063,732 legal immigrants, of whom 673,817 (63.3 percent) were family-related admissions. Both US citizens and permanent resident aliens—Green Card holders—can bring in spouses, parents, and children. In 2002, about 300,000 Americans married foreigners, who then became permanent residents. Another 236,000 legal immigrants were parents and children of US citizens. About 85,000 resident aliens married foreigners (or brought in spouses they had left overseas) or brought in their own children. Only US citizens can sponsor brothers and sisters as immigrants, and that accounted for about 60,000 legal immigrants.

After immigrants with family connections, the second largest group of legal aliens admitted in 2002—174,968 or 16.4 percent—were professionals with advanced degrees or “exceptional abilities” (44,468), as well as wealthy foreigners who have a least \$1 million to invest (149). The third largest category

were the 126,084 refugees and asylum-seekers, who accounted for just under 12 percent of immigrants in 2002.

Anyone who is not a refugee, doesn’t have family in America, and doesn’t have special skills has essentially no



Las Vegas-style craps table—customized for government service.

hope of immigrating legally—unless he plays the lottery. Winners accounted for just four percent of all immigrants in 2002, but they make the immigrant stream even more exotic than it would be otherwise. We have a lottery because immigration is not diverse enough; we need Africans, Bangladeshis and Arabs,

We have a lottery because immigration is not diverse enough; we need Africans, Bangladeshis and Arabs, in addition to millions of Mexicans, Chinese, and Filipinos.

in addition to millions of Mexicans, Chinese, and Filipinos. Very few Americans even know there is an immigration lottery, but it is of absorbing interest in many foreign countries.

‘The Irish Program’

How did the lottery get started? The 1965 Immigration Act abolished the national origins quota system established in the 1920s to preserve the nation’s ethnic balance (see “Fade to Brown,” April 2003). The quota system favored skilled immigrants from the countries that had contributed the bulk of the nation’s founding stock—Great Britain, Germany and Ireland—and kept out most others, particularly non-whites. Great Society anti-racists opposed this common-sense policy. They wanted to give all foreigners an equal chance to immigrate, and thought family reunification was more important than skills.

The mid-1960s and early 1970s were a prosperous time for Western Europeans, and not many wanted to emigrate. Eastern Europeans wanted to come, but the Communists would not let them. As the following figures make clear, Third Worlders, primarily from Asia and Latin America, filled the gap.

During the 1950s, just 153,000 Asians immigrated to the US (Asians had largely been barred from the 1880s to the early 1950s). The number rose to 428,000 during the 1960s, and more than tripled during the 1970s to 1,588,000. During the 1950s, 259,000 Latin Americans (including Caribbeans) immigrated, but during the 1970s that number more than quadrupled to 1,172,000. In the 1950s, just under 300,000 Mexicans arrived, but in the 1970s that figure rose to 640,000, and more than doubled during the 1980s to 1,656,000. Mexico became the largest single immigrant country of origin during the 1960s and has remained so ever since. In fact, by 2002,

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Letters from Readers

Sir — Once again, I read with great interest the accounts by AR readers of how they became aware of race. What strikes me, however, is how often people kept their liberal illusions until there was some kind of violent encounter with blacks. This must mean that prevailing myths are too firmly battered into our minds for mere argument to break them down. Many people need a dramatic, non-logical experience before they see the light.

It is understandable that this should open someone's eyes. However, if this is what it takes, it will be a long time before there are very many of us. This is not yet South Africa, and most of us have not yet been mugged or raped.

I am more encouraged by the accounts of people who have not suffered violence, whose ordinary experiences were enough to disabuse them. It may be that at this point in history, school integration is a good thing for our people, because it brings them into contact with blacks at an impressionable and even rebellious age. Unlike what the liberals keep telling us, contact with blacks does *not* reduce "prejudice." It teaches us there are real differences that cannot be ignored.

Steven Cornish, Roanoke, Va.

Sir — Congratulations on yet another fascinating series on how people "saw the light." I found it interesting that in almost every account, it was blacks who tipped the balance. This makes me wonder what it would be like if there were no blacks in America—only whites, Hispanics and Asians. Would there be even less white racial consciousness than

there is today?

In past generations, whites had a sense of *being white*, no matter what race they faced. In the western United States, for example, they were as adamant about keeping out Japanese and Chinese as they were about keeping out blacks. Now, because sensible attitudes about race are not part of what we learn naturally as we grow up, each of us has to construct his own racial consciousness. This is why we teach ourselves the simplest lessons first, beginning with blacks. The differences in behavior between blacks and whites are so striking, they penetrate even the most clouded minds. Only after blacks have taught us the basic lessons about race do we apply them to Hispanics and Asians.

I don't doubt this is why we hear relatively little about racial trouble in Hawaii, despite the fact that it was the first state in which whites became a minority. There are few blacks in Hawaii, and most of the non-whites are Asians. The lessons of race are therefore less salient—though just as important to us in the long run.

Tom Holden, Sacramento, Calif.

Sir — I read with interest the O Tempora, O Mores! item in the July issue dealing with Patel hotels. Back in 1983, I stayed at a motel in Wichita, Kansas, owned by a Patel. In the lounge I had a chance to talk to the owner, who told me that Patel meant "innkeeper" in his native language. He said that before he immigrated to the US he had worked in the South African diamond mines, where he stole diamonds by swallowing them. When he had a good number, he would hide them inside a candle, which he mailed to his family already here.

After several mailings his family had enough money to buy a motel for cash, and he was able to come over. He told me motels are largely cash businesses so he could get by with paying next to no income tax. He said his family was also buying up coffee and donut shops.

At the time, I didn't know if he was telling the truth or spinning a yarn, but the next year when I was in Chicago, I noticed that just about every Dunkin' Donuts shop was operated by Indians.

Perhaps many of his relatives also spent time in the diamond mines of South Africa.

Erick Jones, Bowling Green, Mo.

Sir — I find it hard to believe Jack Judson's assertion in his letter in the August issue that during the 1980 presidential debate Ronald Reagan advocated a lower minimum wage for blacks than for whites. Surely the grip of political correctness was then already so strong that any such statement would have resulted in the TV screens going blank, followed by universal uproar, and groveling but ineffectual apologies that would have been replayed for ever.

Anthony Young, London, England

Sir — I was pleased to see your August O Tempora item about the Chicago authorities who appear to be waking up to the fact that racial preferences—at least in fire departments—can kill. I hope this public effort to link affirmative action to lethal incompetence will not be washed away in howls of "racism." Maybe it will even embolden other people to point out the obvious.

Whenever I read about something gone wrong—a badly-constructed highway overpass falls down, air traffic controllers goof and planes have a near miss, the police department forgets to change the oil in its patrol cars—I wonder if we are not seeing affirmative action in action.

Most of the time, it is impossible to know. Investigators are not looking for a racial explanation, and even if they stumble onto one, they probably hide it. However, it is a statistical inevitability that when race is a more important hiring criterion than ability, some quota-hire will make a mistake with terrible consequences. It may even happen frequently, but we just don't know.

Andrew Collins, Royal Oak, Mich.



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Mexico had sent more legal immigrants to the United States than any other country except Germany—6,560,000 vs. 7,219,000. Most German immigration was before 1900, but more than half of all Mexicans who have ever *legally* immigrated came since 1981.

Because the 1965 law for the first time allowed recent immigrants to bring in their families, this started a never-ending cycle of chain migration. Third-Worlders filled all the queues and quotas, so by the 1980s, it was very hard for Europeans to get in. The 1965 Immigration Act had, in effect, become a European exclusion act.

The Irish were especially hard hit. More than four million Irish came to the United States between 1820 and 1930, but during the 1970s, the number fell to just 11,490. Many Irish came illegally, and worked in bars, restaurants, and construction. In 1986, as Congress prepared to grant amnesty to millions of mostly Mexican illegals by means of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), Senator Edward Kennedy—who had championed the 1965 Act that was now hurting his kinsmen—added a provision for the first lottery. This granted 10,000 “special visas” to randomly-selected immigrants from countries that had been “adversely affected” by the 1965 law he had helped pass. More than 60 percent of these special visas went to applicants from Ireland, the United Kingdom and Canada, most of whom were here illegally. Presumably, they played the lottery because they did not meet the criteria for legalization in the 1986 amnesty.

“[T]o this day,” says Mark Krikorian of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), “the lottery is often referred to by

congressmen and their staff as ‘The Irish Program.’ But as the program evolved, and as there were fewer and fewer Irish illegals, its emphasis changed, and it’s now more accurately described as the Middle Eastern, East European and African program.” In 2002, there were only 69 Irish diversity immigrants.

How it Works

Both IRCA and the “Irish Program” were supposed to be one-time-only events, but Congress liked the idea of diversity visas, and in 1990 it made the lottery permanent. During its initial phase the program authorized 40,000 visas per year, to be awarded to immigrants from countries underrepresented in the immigrant stream. But between 1992 and 1994, of the 108,436 immigrants who came on diversity visas, 84

The 1965 Immigration Act had, in effect, become a European exclusion act.

percent were from Ireland, Northern Ireland (which immigration law treats separately from the United Kingdom, of which it is a part), Canada and Poland. At this time, it really was something of an Irish program.

In 1995, Congress changed the rules to exclude countries that had sent more than 50,000 immigrants during the previous five years, and raised the ceiling to 55,000 visas. In 1997, Congress made a special allocation of 5,000 diversity visas to Nicaraguans, Cubans, and other Central Americans who had come to the US illegally during the civil wars of the

1980s. This meant the US operated two visa lotteries for a few years, with one just for Central Americans. In 2000, Congress shut down the special Central American lottery, and set the ceiling for all diversity visas at 50,000, where it remains today.

In its present form, the Diversity Visa Lottery Program awards slots to the approximately 167 countries that have sent fewer than 50,000 immigrants during the past five years. This is every country in the world except Canada, China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Mexico, Pakistan, the Philippines, Russia, South Korea, the United Kingdom (except for Northern Ireland), and Vietnam, all of which already send plenty of immigrants. People living in ineligible countries can still apply, though, if they, their spouses or parents were born in an eligible country. A Canadian whose parents were born in Bangladesh, for example, could apply, as could one married to a Bangladeshi. Diversity immigrants can bring in spouses and unmarried children under the age of 21, and since family members are not part of the limit, the program can bring in more than 50,000 people in one year. Once they are here, diversity immigrants can sponsor chain migration just like all other legal immigrants.

Each year’s lottery and selection process takes approximately two years. The application period for the 2004 program, therefore, was 30 days in October 2002. No fewer than 10.2 million foreigners applied, but the State Department rejected 2.9 million applications because they were not properly filled out or didn’t come in on time. To cope with this huge volume of applications the department switched to Internet applications in 2003 for the DV-2005 program.

An applicant now goes to the State Department’s diversity visa lottery website, www.dvlottery.state.gov, and fills in his name, date of birth, sex, city and country of birth, mailing address, country of eligibility if different from that of residence, and marital status, and gives information about his spouse and children. The applicant must also submit an electronic photograph, and one each for his spouse and children. The requirements are surprisingly strict—photos must be 320 pixels wide by 240 pixels high, and be in either 24-bit or 8-bit color or 8-bit grayscale—and anything else disqualifies an application.

Applicants may wear religious head coverings provided they leave the face clearly visible.

Applications are divided into six regions—Africa, Asia (including the Middle East), Europe, North America, Oceania and Latin America. The US Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS) sets regional limits based on immigrant admissions during the previous five years and the total population of the region. The most diversity visas any country can get is seven percent of the 50,000 total, or 3,500.

After the deadline closes, the State Department's Kentucky Consular Center in Williamsburg, Kentucky, conducts the drawing. It sorts each application into the appropriate region, and a computer randomly picks the winners. The center notifies the winners by mail, instructing them to contact the nearest US consulate if they are overseas, or the BCIS if they are in the United States.

The State Department has learned that many applicants do not qualify even if they are winners, so it selects more than twice as many winners as there are slots. For example, there were 110,467 winners for the DV-2004 program. Forty-five percent were Africans, 32 percent were Europeans, and 17 percent were Asians. Central and South Americans were just over three percent, and people living in Oceania were just over one percent. Because Canadians and Mexicans can't play the lottery, the only North American DV-2004 winners were 12 Bahamians.

Winning is only the first part of the process, and does not guarantee a visa. It offers only the privilege of *applying* for one, and there are a few minimal standards. Applicants must either be high school graduates or have spent at least two of the last five years in a job that requires at least two years of training or experience. The would-be immigrant fills out the standard visa application and goes through the screening process, which includes fingerprinting and a security background check. He must also pay the standard visa fee of \$335 for overseas applicants or \$385 for applicants living in the US. In an unusual twist for a lottery, this one costs nothing to enter, but winners pay an additional lottery application fee of \$100. (The State Department makes nothing on the millions of applications it processes every year.)

The winners have exactly one year in

which to get their visa applications approved. Winners in the DV-2005 lottery held last fall got the word this summer. They can apply for the visa only after October 1, 2004, and if the visa hasn't come by September 30, 2005, they are out of luck. If the application got held up in a bureaucratic snarl, that is just too bad; the applicant can enter the lottery again if he wants. There is another way a winner can become a loser through no fault of his own. The program ends once all the diversity visas for a given year have been issued or the deadline passes, which ever comes first. This means someone can apply early, but if consular offices in other countries work more quickly than in his country and fill all the slots before the deadline, his visa is no good even if it would have been issued on time.

Flaws

Foreigners like the lottery but it is not popular here. One of the oddest charges is that it is somehow racist, despite the fact that it brings in more non-whites than whites. Referring back to Edward Kennedy's plan to get more Irish into the country, the Center for Immigration Studies' Mark Krikorian calls the lottery "affirmative action" for white immigrants, and a "racist throwback," "harking back to the 'more-people-who-look-like-me' immigration policy we had until 1965." Dan Stein of the Foundation for Immigration Reform (FAIR) believes the program smacks of the "discredited" national origins system laid to rest by the 1965 Immigration Act. FAIR has also implied that Edward Kennedy and the other Irish-American politicians who created the original lottery program were racists because they "apparently were not satisfied with the dramatic demographic change the nation has undergone over the past 25 years." Presumably, since non-lottery immigration is only 10 percent white, anyone who supports a lottery whose winners are all of 40 percent white must be a "racist."

In 2002, the bulk of the diversity visas went to Africans and Asians. Ethiopians were the largest single nationality at 3,994 (this figure is larger than the per-country limit of 3,500 because it includes Ethiopians who were not living in Ethiopia when they applied).

In the most recent lottery, DV-2004, Nigeria produced the largest number of winners with 7,145, followed by Ghana

at 7,040, Ethiopia at 6,353, Kenya at 5,721, and Bangladesh at 5,126. These are the numbers who won the lottery, not the numbers who got visas. Eighty percent or so of Nigerian winners are usually disqualified, but the process that awards that many slots to Africans is certainly not "racist," even if many African winners turn out to be frauds (see sidebar, next page) or file their papers late.

Critics of the lottery make a better case when they point to the quality of

Top 12 Visa-Winners

1998-2002

Albania	16,291
Ukraine	14,935
Bulgaria	14,395
Nigeria	14,092
Ethiopia	12,247
Romania	11,290
Morocco	9,799
Bangladesh	8,865
Russia	8,630
Ghana	7,966
Pakistan	7,365
Egypt	7,114

Whites are still a minority.

the immigrants. A National Academy of Sciences study found that immigrants with only a high school education cost US taxpayers \$30,000 in government services over their lifetimes (admitting an immigrant with less than a high school education costs \$90,000 over his lifetime). The same study found that immigrants with a college education or more contribute \$100,000 to the country over their lifetimes. If, over a decade, the lottery lets in 500,000 high school graduates rather than 500,000 college graduates, the lifetime opportunity cost is \$65 billion. With its current low requirements, the green card lottery is a net loss to taxpayers.

Green card winners impose the usual cultural costs as well. The World Health Organization estimates the prevalence of female genital mutilation to be 98 percent in Somalia, but that didn't stop the State Department from issuing 233 diversity visas to Somalis in 2002. (Somalis are also one of the largest "refugee" groups, with more than 12,000 scheduled to come over the next few years.)

The lottery also works as an amnesty program. If he was born in an eligible