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OUR NATION OF IMMIGRANTS: SOLVING THE IMMIGRATION CHALLENGE

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HUDAK: Hi, I'm John Hudak, a senior fellow in Governance Studies at the Brookings Institution. This is the fifth and final episode of "Our Nation of Immigrants," a special Brookings Cafeteria podcast series. In this series, I've explored the reality of, and some of the solutions for, the immigration policy problems in the U.S. If you haven't listened to previous episodes, I encourage you to do so.

So far, I have heard from a variety of individuals who either study immigration policy, advocate in this policy space, or have experienced the immigration system firsthand—and in some cases guests fell into multiple categories. What I have heard generally is a story about a broken public policy that is badly in need of reform. I have heard about the human toll that such a system can have on individuals, families, and communities. I've learned that while we are a nation of immigrants, this country today does what it has done for centuries—rely on tropes and stereotypes and in some cases outright lies to corrupt the policy conversation and make reform all that much harder to achieve.

The politics of immigration is a tough nut to crack. It has had breakthrough moments throughout our nation's history—although those moments are too infrequent. However, even in a period of deep political and partisan polarization, I discovered that there is a real opportunity for bipartisan solutions that balance America's interests. That will be the focus of this episode.

As Utah Governor Gary Herbert, a Republican, put it—

HERBERT: Well, I think it's important to the country. We've been a country of immigrants. Since the beginning, people have come to this country for opportunity, not guarantees, but the ability to be in a free society the best they can be.

HUDAK: And Mayor Faulconer of San Diego—

FAULCONER: These new immigrants, these new Americans want to get involved. They

want to help start businesses. They want to create businesses that they may have had where they came from.

HUDAK: Clarissa Martinez de Castro from UNIDOS US looked at it not from a politician's viewpoint, but from that of the American people, and suggested we have the potential for a remarkable level of agreement about immigration reform, but the conversation must change. We cannot change our policies unless we change our understanding about who immigrants are and why they want to come to the U.S. And that conversation begins with leadership throughout this country.

MARTINEZ: I think what we are seeing is that the issue of immigration is being used as a proxy to stir up the politics of division. We have sadly seen, not just in the last three years but for longer, that unfortunately politicians sometimes in a way to try to avoid being held accountable for probably for solving problems that we Americans would like them to solve—they resort to try to turn us against each other or to try to scapegoat people.

HUDAK: That scapegoating comes from individuals operating in an Us versus Them mentality, failing to recognize their own roots and their own family's experience with immigration to the United States, as former Homeland Security Secretary Michael Chertoff reminds us.

CHERTOFF: Let's remember, most people in the United States now are the descendants of migrants. Unless you're a Native American, your ancestors came from a different place. And it would behoove people to remember that fifty or a hundred years ago, maybe their ancestors were looked down upon and had insults hurled back them. And we should therefore be extra sensitive not to use that same kind of attitude with respect to the current generation of people who, for the most part, want to come in legally and either work here temporarily or maybe even ultimately get

asylum here.

HUDAK: And I spoke at length with Congresswoman Judy Chu, who represents the 27th District of California. She is a Democrat and the first Chinese-American woman elected to the U.S. Congress, whose district includes parts of Los Angeles and San Bernardino counties.

CHU: We know that immigrants are essential to this economy, but right now, 11 million of them are stuck in the shadows and are not able to fully participate in our society.

HUDAK: We'll hear more from Representative Chu shortly. But first, this final episode will focus on legislative and other policy proposals that can bring sanity to the current immigration system. We'll also hear from individuals who you have heard from throughout this series who talk about how, while the current environment is a difficult one, it's not entirely new, and requires long-term, thoughtful, bipartisan cooperation at every level of government to fix. Finally, we'll hear something else, something positive, something forward looking: Genuine hope that this country can get it right.

To pick up on Clarissa's prior point about scapegoating, I wanted to know what Rep. Chu thought about how the public conversation affects what goes on in Congress and across America. I spoke with the congresswoman remotely in May in the midst of COVID-19-related distancing.

CHU: Unfortunately, President Trump has made this a centerpiece of his campaign. Those Republicans who might have been open to comprehensive immigration reform seem to be afraid of President Trump. And now they have taken steps back on the progress that we could have made.

Now, the reason I say this is when I came in in 2010, we actually did have a comprehensive immigration reform proposal. And there was the Gang of Eight in the Senate, half Democrat, half Republican, and it included people like John McCain who are very good,

actually, in negotiating a reasonable bipartisan solution to our immigration problems. We know that immigrants are essential to this economy, but right now, 11 million of them are stuck in the shadows and are not able to fully participate in our society. And these folks in the Gang of Eight were actually able to come up with common sense solutions, but it was tied in with so many other provisions that were essential to it, such as proposals for how to deal with our legal immigration backlog and proposals for dealing with agriculture. There were so many things that they did address.

So it shows that if we didn't have a president that was so actively pushing antiimmigrant proposals, we actually could get somewhere. Even then, I do have to give you a bit of sunshine here, which is that this last December, the House did pass a bipartisan Farm Workforce Modernization Act, of which I was an original co-sponsor. There are many Republicans that see the negative impact of not having a workforce to deal with the agricultural in the fields. They are hurting. So that's what brought them to the table. And they joined in this bill, which creates a pathway for temporary agricultural workers in the U.S. to become permanent residents. And it was actually a very unusual experience to be there at this press conference celebrating this bill with my Republican colleagues all coming together on this bill that would benefit immigrant agricultural workers. But I enjoyed it, I must say.

The other area where we have commonality is our healthcare workers, because we have nurses, doctors, technicians, and other healthcare professionals that are obviously working tirelessly to save American lives.

HUDAK: We will get back to Representative Chu later in the episode, but her discussion of the Farm Workforce Modernization Act is an important one. That bill passed the House on December 11, 2019, by a vote of 260 to 165, with one representative voting “present.” Two-

hundred-twenty-six Democratic members were joined by 34 Republicans to vote in favor of it. But it has since remained dormant in the Senate. The Farm Workforce Modernization Act is one of the many legislative proposals that could make a real difference in this space and can be effective at fixing mistakes of the past, boosting legal and safe immigration, protecting DACA, and empowering people educationally *and* economically to come out of the shadows and participate more fully in the economy. I asked our friends at UNIDOS US about such proposals.

GUEVARA: From our perspective, one of the easiest things that can be done right now is to bring the American Dream Promise Act to the floor in the Senate for a vote. I think we need, and I think we have a moral imperative, to take folks who are on DACA and also individuals on temporary protected status out of this legal limbo that they currently find themselves. It's cruel. It's inhumane to subject them to the past, to what's coming ahead with the court decisions and what they've been living in many ways. The House has passed this bill on a bipartisan basis last year, last summer. It's an issue that we worked closely on.

I would also say that one of the things that we are thinking about is what are the type of measures as we prepare for a broader conversation around immigration, the need to legalize the 11 million? What are the type of measures that we can do right now, perhaps? And I'd like to refer to as provide off ramps for folks, whether it is sensible, I think bills, that provide individuals who have family here that in some instances allow folks to whether they pay a fine, referring to a measure by Congressman Espaillat that's out there that would restore provision of immigration law that essentially would do that. To allow folks to get right, pass the background checks and so forth.

What are measures that are out there that allow people who are waiting in line right now for their turn to go in front of immigration, judge to seek cancelation of their deportation, but are

caught up in a massive backlog of largely this administration's doing, in my humble opinion, to apply with one of the agencies affirmatively, USCIS, to seek their relief with them.

What are the measures that allow us to, in effect, move people who have been here for a very long time, playing by the rules and many effects, and move them from one side of the ledger, if you will, to the other? That can be done perhaps while we wait for the broader conversations around immigration reform.

And look, we are not naive and understand that this is caught up in the political moment that we live in right now. We also understand and we need to be clear eyed about the fact that this administration has been waiting for this moment as we speak, to put forth what I think would be a very aggressive bill that would do few favors to the country, that would do us all harm as a trade for what they think would be fair on the DACA question.

So we need to be clear eyed while we think about what these off ramps are for folks to be mindful of what might be coming down the pike and not fall into the traps that the administration would like to lay for us.

So these are the type of things that we're thinking about as we head into the year ahead. But I think that one of the easiest things to start that is the moral thing to do is for the Senate to take up the American Dream and Promise Act and provide relief to a lot of these young folks and people within TPS status.

HUDAK: And there's a lot more that can be done. One area badly in need of reform involves immigration detention in the United States—and most Americans agree it needs reform. A June 2020 poll conducted by CBS News found that 68 percent of Americans believe the conditions in immigration detention facilities are a serious problem; 58 percent believe the federal government is not doing enough to ensure humane conditions; and 51 percent believe

those conditions are inhumane. To learn more about this issue I spoke to Sarah Gardiner, the policy director at Freedom for Immigrants, a non-profit organization that monitors human rights abuses faced by immigrants detained by ICE. I asked Sarah about one specific proposal—the DONE Act.

GARDINER: So we worked with the offices of Senator Kamala Harris and Representative Pramila Jayapal to reintroduce the Detention Oversight Not Expansion Act last summer, summer of 2019. So, broadly speaking, this bill would enact a moratorium on expansion of immigration detention. So no new contracts, no expansion of existing contracts. And it would also ask DHS to complete a study outlining how it could reduce detention levels by half using community based alternatives to detention.

Since reintroducing that act, a lot has changed at the federal level and we've seen during COVID-19 now detention levels are in the mid-twenty thousands, which is lower than they were even during the Obama administration.

And so I think we're in this sort of interesting political window where we've seen reductions in detention levels that I think a lot of advocates didn't think would have been possible under the Trump administration. And I think we have an opportunity to be kind of challenging the implicit assumption that some sort of immigration detention is necessary and that we certainly never needed that astronomically high levels that we had during the Trump administration. And I think a lot of kind of like minded offices that maybe opposed the Trump administration zero tolerance agenda will agree, oh, detaining 55,000 people a day, that's crazy, but still might think that detention in some form is necessary. And now we're seeing firsthand how harmful it is and how this dramatic reduction happened really quickly and the world didn't end.



All of the challenges of COVID-19, I think also do open some opportunities for maybe a new political landscape and policy solutions and frankly, dreaming of a world without detention that wouldn't have been feasible before.

HUDAK: It's not just Democrats like Senator Harris and Representative Jayapal looking to reform the immigration system. I asked Utah's Republican Governor Gary Herbert about a congressional proposal that he supports that would create pilot programs to give states like his more flexibility in accepting immigrants. That proposal was authored by Congressman John Curtis from the 3rd District of Utah. It's important to note, Representative Curtis is not a progressive Democrat. He is a conservative Republican who, according to FiveThirtyEight.com, votes with President Trump over 95 percent of the time. I asked Governor Herbert if he thought such a proposal could become law in the current environment.

HERBERT: Well, timing is very important. You know, when is the right time to strike, when is the right time to move a policy issue? Here's what I would say, is there's never a wrong time to do the right thing. And so now is a good time for us to take a look at elevating the role of states. States have always been—supposed to be from the beginning a co-equal partner with the Federal Government. And James Madison's Federalist 45, which I'm sure you have on your nightstand and read it nightly like I do, talked about the role of the states in conjunction with the role of this new, stronger federal government and the new Constitution he was trying to get ratified. And he said, don't worry states, the role of this new government, the stronger centralized government, we've got them in a box. The powers we've given to them are few and defined, the enumerated powers of Article 1, Section 8. The powers we've given to the states are numerous and indefinite. So, we need to start getting back to that concept. Unfortunately, over time, we have drifted to the idea that we need to ask the federal government to take care of every issue

that we can think of. The phrase we say, “Call your congressman,” and then they do. Cradle-to-grave we want Congress to take care of us, federal government take care of us.

What they should be doing is calling their local mayor or their city councilman, their county commissioners, their state legislature, certainly their governor. Because states are doing it better, they're actually solving problems. We don't have the gridlock in our respective states, Republican-led or Democrat-led. They get things done, certainly more effectively than we see in Washington.

So, let's quit asking the federal government to do everything. Start with asking our local people in the confines of the state and now would be a great time to do it. We'll not only get it done, but we'll save money in the process. Yet we have a problem we estimate in Utah, that there's about a 15 to 20 percent markup for anything that you want the federal government to do on your behalf. If we just did it ourselves, cut out the middleman, we can save about 15 or 20 percent. Transportation is a prime example. I can build roads for 15 percent less cost with the same standards, same statistics, the requirements that they're building for federals now, I can do with my contractors in the State of Utah for 15 percent less money.

HUDAK: Many of the interviews for this podcast were conducted early in 2020, before COVID-19 caused massive shutdowns in the United States and across the world. However, as I mentioned earlier, I spoke with Representative Chu remotely in late May, and I asked her what the pandemic has meant for immigrant communities and how Congress has responded. Specifically, I asked how the CARES Act—signed into law in late March—has fallen short, and how the HEROES Act—passed by the House in May—would address those issues and shortcomings.

CHU: Democrats have been pushing for this, but since every one of the previous bills had

to be the result of bipartisan negotiation, immigrants were left out. And that is why Senator Mazie Hirono and I introduced the Coronavirus, Immigrant Families Protection Act. It would, of course, allow individuals who file taxes with the individual taxpayer I.D. number to get benefits, the ITIN number. In addition to this, it extends expiring work authorizations and immigration statuses to ensure that immigrants don't lose their status while the COVID-19 crisis is going on. It makes sure that immigrants have access to emergency medical services for prevention, testing, and treatment. And it makes sure that this public charge rule that Trump is putting forth would not affect these immigrants negatively in that if they receive any services, that they would not be denied a green card.

Now, I do have to say the Heroes Act that was passed on May 15th did include some of these provisions, especially the part about testing and treatment and allowing ITIN providers to get the rebates. It also ensures that there is translation of these COVID-19 resources, because that's another thing. So many of our immigrants are limited English proficient and, in fact, one-third of Asian-Americans are limited English proficient. So they should have knowledge about how to get these resources, whether it's unemployment or health treatment or a PPP—payment protection loan for their small business. So, it has all these good provisions.

HUDAK: President Trump is not the first president to govern over a broken immigration system, but I wanted to learn different perspectives about how changes from administration to administration have had real impacts on people and policy. First, I asked Secretary Chertoff.

CHERTOFF: There's no question that President Bush's attitudes very much set the tone. And the thing you have to remember about him is he actually was very sympathetic in understanding of migrants and their needs. And he was very generous in terms of his views of people, for example, south of the border. A lot of this is he used to tell me is, he was governor of

Texas. And people in Texas have a lot of interaction with Mexico, with people in Mexico. There's been a fairly free back and forth, as well as economic activity across the border. And, of course, you have many Texans who have family in Mexico or are descended from people who were living in Mexico.

So President Bush was particularly sympathetic and warm in his understanding of the needs of migrants and the value they bring to the country. Now, that's not to say that he didn't want to enforce the law. And he supported what we needed to do to enforce the law. But it was not was cruelty. It was with a desire to be fair both to people in the country and people outside the country and to recognize the value that immigrants bring to the United States.

HUDAK: Next, let's hear what Martine Kalaw thinks. You'll remember Martine from episode 4. She writes about immigration, and she herself at one time faced deportation hearings, but had citizenship in no country and was rendered stateless.

KALAW: Have I seen changes in the immigrant experience through the different administrations? So, when I think back to all the different administrations that I've been through since the beginning of my journey, there was the George W. Bush administration. There are pros and cons in terms of how they contributed or impacted negatively the immigration space. So George W. Bush: I would argue that the initial Muslim ban, which wasn't called the Muslim ban, really started with him, right, with axis of evil. This whole idea that everyone was a terrorist if they looked a certain way. So that was originally where this whole concept of Muslim ban really originated, in my opinion. But at the same time, when you think about all of the different some of the relief programs that were introduced came from the Bush administration, temporary protected status was one. So it was like a seesaw, there was pros and cons.

During the Obama administration some would argue that know the number of deportees

increased during his administration. But at the same time, his administration supported and signed DACA, which has impacted at least 700,000 individuals. It's a temporary protected status. It doesn't offer relief long-term. But it was something.

And then the Trump administration: maybe less of a seesaw. It's just been a downward spiral in the context of immigration, in the sense that there's a Muslim ban.

We group everything within immigration into one big bucket and we don't make distinctions. What we do is we will continue to make tradeoffs. Right? We'll say, all right, well, we'll keep DACA and we'll get rid of temporary protected status. Right? Because the general public doesn't really know the difference. They don't they don't really understand. So, as long as we use this blanket to address immigration, things will not change.

So to answer your question, across these administrations, has there been a change with the immigrant community? Their response to this has changed, meaning, in my opinion, that we've become more vocal and less afraid because there is power in numbers, so more people are speaking out. Are we seeing the changes that we want as quickly as we want? No, but I think that more people are speaking. We're getting more allies. And that's important, and that's making an impact and that's going to make a difference in some way, shape or form.

HUDAK And once again, we hear from Freedom for Immigrants' Sarah Gardiner. I asked her about policies under President Trump.

GARDINER: I think this administration, their zero tolerance agenda is to look at anyone that is in the U.S. for any sort of civil immigration violation as detainable and with the goal of deporting, which is a bit of a departure from past administrations. But there's very little due process in the immigration detention deportation apparatus. Something that really shocks people is that you have a right to counsel but one is not going to be appointed for you. So there's no sort

of pro bono legal representation system the way that there is in other parts of the judicial system. So you have people that can go through their entire immigration proceeding without any sort of meaningful access to counsel, without really understanding the charges that are being levied against them. This can have far-reaching consequences, where people will accept a felony charge for illegal reentry with the understanding that they'll be deported quicker, will spend less time in detention and not understand that that opens them up for criminal processing if they do choose to reenter and potentially longer periods of detention and bigger consequences for themselves and their family.

So I just really want to question the idea of due process at all in the way that our immigration detention and deportation system is set up.

HUDAK: But again, not all of the problems in our immigration system started with President Trump. I asked UNIDOS' Carlos Guevara about the changes that happened under President Obama, an important question as his vice president, Joe Biden, is now the Democratic nominee for president.

GUEVARA: I think to lay that little foundation, a number of things have transpired in the past about close to 10 years. The nation has spent significant amount of treasure on so-called enforcement of the border. In some ways, one could argue that that those type of resources and investments have had significant impacts on how people are coming to the country. Beginning around 2012 or so, I think we started to see a shift in who is coming to the United States. That really underscores the point that we were making earlier about folks who have been here for a significant amount of time. In fact, prior to 2012, most of the folks who had been coming to the United States were of Mexican origin. We're seeing more distinct communities, primarily from the northern triangle. Yes, referring to Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, but other countries as

well. And the fact of that shift, I think, has contributed to the way we conduct and the folks around the country perceive the immigration issue. I remember working myself in the administration, the previous administration, some of the images, frankly, that were exploited of the overcrowding systems along the border, to sow some of these fears that Clarissa was describing a minute ago about and perceptions of the community. And that for me, marked a beginning of a shift in the perceptions of who's coming to the country, folks who have an understanding of what the reforms need to look like.

And since then, I think there was a valiant effort to try to get an immigration reform system, immigration reform done in 2013 that was in part impacted by these dynamics going on the border and these shifts as well. And while the Senate did act, it tied the hand as the House did not act on their actions of the previous administration, who, by our own analysis and that of many others, had not been doing a good job when it came to our community. And in some in some instances began to recognize some of those issues and start a new way forward in 2014.

What I would say is that when we get to 2016, we start to see a marked difference in the way the issue is leveraged by folks to use that fear and division for political purposes. And I think in many ways we have been set back significantly from the efforts to try to achieve sensible solutions, the sensible solutions that we need. But it's why we continue to do the work that we do to try to restore that sanity that we need and ultimately get to the place that we want in terms of the solutions for many in our communities.

HUDAK: I want to end this section of the episode with a question I posed to Representative Chu regarding an executive order President Trump issued that temporarily suspended immigration to the United States.

CHU: The Trump administration has an executive order prohibiting immigration for 60

days due to the COVID-19 crisis. Now, objectively, much of what's going on with immigration has come to a halt because of COVID-19. Many of our offices are closed down. But we are very concerned about him utilizing this measure to lay the groundwork for future punitive actions. In fact, we believe that this is an order that will harm so many that are attempting to come in. He did have exceptions, I do have to say. There were exceptions there for the agricultural workforce and for our H-1B workers, many of whom are health care workers.

HUDAK: Representative Chu is referring to Presidential Proclamation 10014 issued in April 2020 which suspended most immigration into the United States for 60 days. After our interview, on June 22, President Trump issued a follow up proclamation, 10052, that extended that ban on immigration through December 31, 2020. Representative Chu had a prediction when we chatted in May about what the consequences of extending that action would be.

CHU: So, it was obvious that he knew what negative economic impact would be. But if this was extended even further, this could have a chilling effect to immigration in this country in the future.

HUDAK: On issues like immigration, policy doesn't happen solely at the national level. The effects of national level policy are felt at the state and local levels as well. Depending on the who is president and who controls Congress, local leaders can face dramatically different environments and policy landscapes, and must be ready to deal with whatever Washington hands them. San Diego Mayor Kevin Faulconer and El Paso Mayor Dee Margo had some thoughts about how that affects them and their cities.

FAULCONER: We've worked under Democratic administrations and Republican administrations, and that's will continue to be a fact of life. And I think that's why it's so important for us as local leaders—San Diego mayor, Tijuana mayor, elected officials—to



demonstrate how closely we do work together. But every administration is going to take a different approach to issues. That's part of what is going to happen. But I think we can provide that unique perspective to our federal leaders about the reality of what's happening here on the ground, about the proximity and the close relationship that we have. How important this economic engine is. And, again, I think it's incredibly important that we demonstrate that not just here at the local level, but are very active in Washington, D.C., and indeed in Mexico City.

One of the biggest issues that we are working on right now is the cross-border issue on the Tijuana River Valley in terms of sewage pollution. We can fix this. We are going to fix this. And it's going to take both Mexico and Washington, D.C., working together. We just signed through USMCA a really significant dollar amount to increase our wastewater treatment. That is a good example of us working together. And again, we can show on the local level what it's going to take to help change policies on the federal level.

MARGO: Our biggest issue has been historically that El Paso, except for the immigration issues and the shooting on August the 3rd, we've been an unknown jewel. People have never realized where we are or who we are or we're about. When I served in the Texas legislature, it was stated that 70 percent of the legislature had never been to El Paso. We are geographically due south of Albuquerque. We're in a separate time zone than the rest of Texas. We're a mountainous desert region and the rest of Texas is not.

So, just the biggest issue I have is to say, if you want to understand the border, come to El Paso. We will explain it to you. We will show it to you firsthand. And then we will talk about the issues that need to be dealt with in Washington to alleviate the immigration challenges. DACA to me, deferred action issues on these people who were brought over and grew up, we have a lot of DACA in El Paso. And a lot of them don't even speak Spanish.

I think that the rhetoric has been misplaced, misinterpreted, misspoken, whatever you want to say. And people need to understand, these are viable contributing not-citizens but should be citizens of El Paso. And frankly, if you served in the military, it ought to be actually automatic to me that you get citizenship. I mean there are DACA recipients who have served in our military and died. To me that should be an easy one to deal with. And then the rest of it is going to be political heartburn.

HUDAK: So, where do we go from here? Looking out at the immigration policy landscape it can be brutally depressing. Like a lot in American politics today—public health, the economy, polarization, disinformation—we face not a moment of crisis, but a period of multiple crises.

This series has highlighted some of the problems that exist in our immigration system. Whether it's misinformation or outright lies about who immigrants are, where they come from, and what they do once they come here; whether it is the manner in which detained immigrants and their families are separated and housed and treated; whether it is the biases that exist and the stoking of the flames of xenophobia that some in this country embrace, one thing is clear: immigration reform is a necessity.

And that is as true for undocumented individuals as it is for permanent residents and citizens—naturalized or natural born.

Yes, unchecked and unregulated immigration—a system of open borders—would create problems for the United States. But no serious thinker supports such a position. Instead, reform must balance security with humanity and an understanding that immigration policy is complex and has to do with more than the U.S.-Mexico border, and that solutions to our problems require more than building a porous wall through deserts, along rivers, between cities, and through

Native lands.

But, of course, despite these challenges, Americans—new and old—and those striving to become Americans do not see dark days ahead. They see hope and opportunity. They see our current environment not as a permanent logjam, but one that can and will eventually give way to logical, functional, effective, and humane policies.

HERBERT: We found here's our goal to have a great quality of life, economic opportunity, expansion of opportunities not only for ourselves but for our children and our grandchildren and the rising generations. And we believe that having a rational immigration policy and treating refugees as they ought to be treated actually helps enhance those goals and I think other states will find that's true for them too.

We need to set aside some of the harsh rhetoric and find good policy.

MARTINEZ: We are actually seeing the government actively increase the undocumented population by attacking those status under which those immigrants have come in. At the same time, we know from conversations with the community and the many groups we work with that immigrants, and particularly undocumented immigrants, want nothing more than to be good with the law and to have that opportunity for legal status.

And so we could see that if that gets reinstated, certainly the thousands of current DACA recipients will continue to renew. Which is exactly what we would want them to do. And hopefully we would be able to encourage others to do so while we get members of Congress to act on the only solution that they have the authority to produce to truly modernize our immigration system. And again, the solutions are not unknown and they're not intractable. We have had this debate multiple times. We know how to do this. We just need to get members to stop stalling. And sadly, because usually immigration solutions have been delivered at the hands

of both parties—it's always been a bipartisan solutions that have advanced—we have seen lately, particularly on the Republican side, many people being reluctant to be part of that solution the country wants to see. And that's where we as voters, as civil society, have a role to play to continue the push for a sensible solution on this issue.

FAULCONER: Our relationship is such a critical part of who we are. And I talk about it in terms of facts. I talk about it in terms of what's really happening. And I talk about our history. But probably most importantly, the incredible potential we have as a region when we work together. And when we talk about it in those terms, like I said, it's a success story, one that we're very proud of here in the San Diego region. And when I interact with border mayors all across the region, whether it's, you know, El Paso, you name it, mayors have a similar story to tell. And so why I have spent so much time on organizing all of all of the mayors on our southern border is because it is important. We're going to have challenges. Of course we are. But I think it's incredibly important that we base our actions and decisions on what's best for our constituents, what's best for our economy. And when we do that, we're going to come out ahead.

CHU: I have optimism that things will change once President Trump is not in office anymore, because he is fanning the flames of xenophobia. It is part and parcel of the way that he sees himself remaining in office by appealing to his base and portraying immigrants in the worst possible light.

And yet I know that there are Republicans that are in constant contact with the immigrants in their district. I also know that there are Republicans who are very sympathetic to, say for instance, the DREAM Act students—to the students who are here through no fault of their own. And there was a time when we had quite a few Republicans who were supporters of the DREAM Act. But that has all gone away with President Trump. I do believe that the basic

philosophy that led them to want to support the DREAM Act and other actions is still there.

So, I am hoping that we can return back to the stance that we once had in this country where we appreciate our immigrants and where we appreciate the diversity of the groups in this country.

CHERTOFF: If you look at the tech community, some of the top leaders—our most brilliant businesspeople in the tech world—come from other parts of the world, and we were lucky enough to have them stay. And at the other end of the kind of business spectrum, when you're dealing with agriculture or health care or all kinds of very necessary services, we couldn't do those without migrants. So, if you want to be realistic about what this country needs, we need better-regulated and more migration, not flailing out and insulting people from the rest of the world.

ANDERSON: It all comes down to common sense. And I'm firmly I firmly believe that we as a country politically, we still fall somewhere in the middle of the bell curve. The two extremes on the outside of the bell curve get all the attention. But the rest of us, regardless of which box we check on our party affiliation, have a lot of commonality in terms of our concerns, our interests, our hopes and our fears and our dreams for ourselves as well as our children and our neighbors. And we just have to get rid of the noise and get down to business, because that's what it's all about.

HUDAK: Immigration reform isn't easy. Very little is in the American system. In a period of global pandemic and one of the deepest recessions in American history, those challenges can be magnified. But the best approach moving forward is not to buy into the vilification of immigrants—a group of people who have built this country.

And as Secretary Chertoff noted, almost everyone in the United States traces their roots

to immigrant families—maybe not from Mexico, maybe not from China, maybe not from Afghanistan—but from somewhere. And most people have family members who have experienced discrimination or bias, whether you are Black, brown, or white. Whether your ancestors came here for opportunity, out of necessity, to flee terror, or in bondage.

I've learned a lot in this journey over the past five episodes, and I hope you have, too. We've heard about the problems, and we've heard about the proposals that will shape and guide our future. Immigration has been a complex problem that is older than the Republic and won't be fixed overnight. But we need to lower the temperature, excise from our politics and our rhetoric lies and misinformation, and recognize that people from other lands are not inherently our enemy, nor are people across the political aisle necessarily the opposition on every issue.

And only then will we understand that we're a nation of immigrants, and our future depends on that remaining the case.

(RONALD REAGAN): We lead the world because unique among nations we draw our people, our strength, from every corner of the world. And by doing so we continually renew and enrich our nation. While other countries cling to the stale past, here in American we breathe life into dreams, we create the future, and the world follows us into tomorrow. Thanks to each wave of new arrivals to this land of opportunity, we're a land forever young, forever bursting with energy and new ideas, and always on the cutting edge, always leading the world to the next frontier. This quality is vital to our future as a nation. If we ever closed the door to new Americans, our leadership in the world would soon be lost.

HUDAK: This has been Our Nation of Immigrants.

A lot of people contributed to the episodes in this special series of the Brookings Cafeteria Podcast. First, I want to thank my guests who took time to let me interview them for

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I'm John Hudak.