

What Immigration Can Cost

As experienced at the community level

by **B. Meredith Burke**

That art can make a political statement is one of its strengths. Photographic images can be particularly potent, whether evoking love, community, work, or war.

Once they impart more than the essential artist identification, the captions accompanying a formal art exhibit may also become political commentary. A case in point is the caption to the final image in "A Nation of Strangers," currently at the Ansel Adams Center for Photography in San Francisco.

The untitled work by American Leonard Freed shows a group of Hmong refugees in Wausau, Wisconsin in 1994. The caption, by Arthur Ollman, director of San Diego's Museum of Photographic Arts and co-curator of the show, informs us:

As immigrants have settled principally in large inner cities, they have filled neighborhoods often left nearly

B. Meredith Burke, Ph.D., an economist and demographer, researches and writes on California fertility and population changes. This article was published in the February 26, 1996 edition of the San Francisco Chronicle and is reprinted by permission.

empty by white flight. ... They also have revitalized the schools in such neighborhoods, with the influx of new students and the attendant \$5,000 or more in state funds that are spent annually on each student. In smaller communities, a sudden influx of immigrants can present many problems. This Hmong community is in a small Midwestern city that is having difficulty accommodating a large number of new arrivals.

"Having difficulty" is a deceptive understatement of the Wausau dilemma, initiated by its townsfolk generously supporting a few dozen refugees in 1978. A thriving city of about 35,000 with a diverse, well-paying economic base, it was the most ethnically homogeneous city in the country in the 1980 census — 99 percent white; descendants of Germans, Poles, and New England Yankees. It had no abandoned urban core or emptied schools, just well-tended, safe, generally middle-class residential areas. No one foresaw that by April, 1994, Wausau would be the subject of an *Atlantic Monthly* article about one of the swiftest and most massive peacetime demographic transformations.

Among post-1965 newcomers, the Hmong are arguably the furthest removed from industrial culture. In their home country they lived isolated in the

mountains, lacked a written language and had the early and high rates of childbearing necessary for perpetuating a society in which barely half those born survive to puberty and many women die in childbirth.

In an industrial society these reproductive patterns lead to families with eight or 10 children (a fivefold increase per generation). Without marketable skills but with many dependents,

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Hmong adults move permanently onto the welfare rolls. In December 1995, 72 percent of the Hmong in Marathon County (where Wausau is by far the largest municipality) received welfare vs. 4.7 percent for non-Hmong residents. Alternatively, Hmong are 3.9 percent of the county's population and 39 percent of its welfare of fall,

1995, the Wausau school district had 9,100 students, 1,800 of whom were Southeast Asian. The latter were 16 percent of the grade 6 through 12 enrollment; 30 percent of grade K-5.

Racial polarization, incipient busing, gangs, pregnant girls — longtime Wausau residents never envisioned such phenomena and generally do not consider them cultural enrichments.

Wisconsin schools spend nearly \$7,000 per student annually, nearly all of it coming from local property taxes. The state devotes some funds toward equalizing tax rates in the 400-plus school districts, but differences remain. It does not fund ESL (English as a second language) instruction. The Department of Public Instruction

“...Hmong are 3.9 percent of the county’s population and 39 percent of its welfare recipients.”

informed me that federal ESL funding is low and that local districts carry most of the load. For 1994-95, Wausau spent \$2.1 million on ESL instruction, the equivalent of 37 teachers and 38 aides.

Arthur Ollman, the San Francisco show’s organizer, is a decent liberal arts administrator. He delights in his multi-cultural circle of (presumably well-

educated and low-fertility) friends and colleagues, frowns upon “nativists” and relishes a vision of the United States as a microcosm of the world. A true urbanite, he welcomes larger cities and a larger American population. He cannot allow that a country’s citizens (or its ecologists) should have any, let alone a final, say in a desirable population level. That power resides outside our borders.

The caption he drafted has factual errors. More importantly, it uses such subjective terms as “large” or “difficulty” rather than give numbers. The show succeeds as propaganda, but fails the prime goal of an educational institution — equipping the viewer to reach his own interpretation of events. □

Thought-Provoking Publications from The Social Contract Press

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Surrendering the Colors

Should only citizens vote?

by Ken Hamblin

It's no secret that I can be pretty hard nosed when it comes to defending the symbolism of the red, white and blue.

I have written on numerous occasions that I am in full support of a constitutional amendment to protect this nation's flag from the whims of the disgruntled malcontents who would discard not only the symbols of America, but the very fundamental principles for which they stand.

From the first shot that sparked the American Revolution, fired off the bridge at Concord, Massachusetts, in 1775 to the flag-draped coffin that carried the broken body of Army Sgt. Donald Dugan, our nation's first casualty in Bosnia, back to his family and friends, the colors of our nation have been present to illustrate the concept of justice and freedom for which Americans of every social and economic caste have gallantly given their lives.

Freedom isn't cheap; it isn't free. An endless column of names carved into this nation's war memorials stands as

Ken Hamblin is a columnist syndicated by the New York Times and host of the nationally syndicated radio show, "The Black Avenger."

testimony to that fact.

I do not believe that it is possible to keep the flame of our liberty burning bright when the symbol of our unity and strength, Old Glory, is reduced to the status of a floor mat or a rag to be burned and trampled in the dirt in the name of free speech.

I believe eventually such disrespect for the symbol weakens our strength as a sovereign and free republic.

It erodes the very principles upon which our nation is built.

A prime example of that erosion is embodied in the wishes of Mabel Teng, a San Francisco supervisor who currently is lobbying for a law that would make it possible for noncitizens of the United States who have immigrated here legally to vote in school board elections.

By the logic of supervisor Teng, as recounted in a recent edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*.

Legally registered aliens living in the United States [I wonder how many coincidentally happen to reside in the supervisor's district] work and pay taxes and just because they have not passed the legal requirements for citizenship, we (lawful citizens of the U.S.) should not disenfranchise them.

Disenfranchise them? When

did they earn the right to be enfranchised?

Disagree with me if you will, but I think this is the kind of disjointed left-wing political rhetoric that comes from trashing, denouncing and reducing the traditions and the symbols of our nation — such symbols as the flag — to nothing more than a red, white and blue rag.

Clearly such disrespect has inspired politicians like Teng to conclude that we are a nation of people who have matured to passively accept the public denunciation of our heritage and our national symbols, so we must be ready for the sanctity of our citizenship to be snatched away.

***"...the right to vote
[given to] legal
immigrants is an
obvious next step for
an indulgent San
Francisco politician."***

With tens of thousands of illegals slipping across our southern border every year and openly demanding to be fed, clothed, housed, educated and medically comforted, I guess we should realize that the right to