

## Stephen Miller's Strait of Hormuz

*di Robert Reich*

His crackdown on immigrants is assumed to be good for America as long as it causes immigrants more pain than it does us. Same "logic" as Trump is using in Iran.

Trump's chief bigot, Stephen Miller, said on Fox News that immigrants to the United States bring problems that extend through generations.

“Not only is the first generation unsuccessful,” Miller claimed. “You see persistent issues in every subsequent generation. So you see consistent high rates of welfare use, consistent high rates of criminal activity, consistent failures to assimilate.”

Bullshit. The children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren of most immigrants are models of upward mobility in America.

In a [recent paper](#), researchers found that immigrants today are no slower to move into the middle class than immigrants were a century ago. In fact, no matter when their parents came to the U.S. or what country they came from, children of immigrants have *higher* rates of upward mobility than their U.S.-born peers.

Stephen Miller's great-great-grandfather was born in a dirt-floor shack in the village of Antopol, a shtetl in what is now Belarus. He came to America in 1903 with \$8 in his pocket and spoke no English. Three generations later, little Stephen was born in 1985 to American parents but somehow developed a visceral hatred for immigrants.

Miller and Trump have been dealing with immigrants the same way Pete Hegseth and Trump have been dealing with Iran and the Strait of Hormuz — inflicting pain on both them *and* the United States, in the hope *their* pain will be worse than the pain *we* endure.

Today's Tax Day was supposed to be a big PR boon for Trump, in which he touts his “no taxes on tips” and other ersatz tax “cuts” for average working Americans (while

hiding that his Big Ugly bill actually gave most of its benefits to the wealthy and big corporations, and paid for them by taking money from Medicaid and food stamps and other programs the working class and poor rely on).

But the war in Iran has made everything — even Stephen Miller’s war on immigrants — feel like the Strait of Hormuz.

Consider that before Miller ordered the Internal Revenue Service to give ICE officials the addresses of people subject to deportation, undocumented immigrants had been paying roughly \$60 billion annually in federal taxes, much of it going into Social Security and Medicare — programs from which they don’t benefit.

Now, tax experts fear many immigrants won’t file returns, and those who formerly had their taxes withheld in every paycheck will shift into under-the-table jobs. The Yale Budget Lab, a nonpartisan research center, projected lost tax revenue of about \$300 billion over a decade.

Meanwhile, Miller’s vast, sadistic crackdown on undocumented workers is causing significant pain for the U.S. economy. There aren’t enough workers in construction, hospitality, and agriculture to keep these sectors going. Another Strait of Hormuz situation.

Let’s be clear. Apart from Native Americans, we are *all* immigrants — *all* descended from “foreigners.” Some of our ancestors came here eagerly; some came because they were no longer safe in their homelands; some came enslaved.

As Ronald Reagan put it in a [1988 speech](#),

You can go to Japan to live, but you cannot become Japanese. You can go to France to live and not become a Frenchman. You can go to live in Germany or Turkey, and you won’t become a German or a Turk. But ... anybody from any corner of the world can come to America to live and become an American. A person becomes an American by adopting America’s principles, especially those principles summarized in the “self-evident truths” of the Declaration of Independence, such as “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Reagan understood that America is a set of aspirations and ideals more than it is a nationality.

Miller and Trump, on the other hand, want to fuel bigotry. Their entire project depends on hate. Like dictators before him, Trump's road to tyranny is paved with stones hurled at "them" — whether "they" are immigrants, Iranians, or anyone else who doesn't fit the white Christian nationalist mold.

America is better than Trump and his chief bigot.