Thought on Tap #6 (Immigration and Refugees)

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Transcript:

Introduction:

00:00 Bretton Rodriguez: You're listening to Thought on Tap, a monthly podcast about the role of the humanities in the world today, brought to you by the College of Liberal Arts and the Core Humanities department at the University of Nevada, Reno. This is Bretton Rodriguez, a lecturer in Core Humanities and a Co-Organizer of thought on tap. And this is Carlos Mariscal, assistant professor of philosophy and also a co-organizer of Thought on Tap. And every month, we convene a panel of local experts to discuss the issues of the day and have a moderated discussion at the university laughing planet.

00:29 Carlos Mariscal: This month, we're talking about the role of humanities and shaping immigration and refugee initiatives. And now here's your host Lydia Huerta.

Immigrants and Refugees:

00:36 Lydia Huerta: Well, hello. Welcome everyone. I'm very, very excited to welcome you all to this event. On Thought on Tap, where we're going to be discussing the role of the humanities and shaping immigration and refugee initiatives. Um, I wrote first like to start by thanking our sponsors, thank you to laughing planet, the core humanities program and the College of Liberal Arts. Thank you so much for your funding, for the space. It says what makes community happen. Um, also just want it to kind of give you a preview of what's going to happen tonight. I'm going to give you, I'm going to introduce our panelists tonight. Then, uh, I'm going to read a short statement that I wrote and then I'm going to proceed into asking some questions about shaping, the role of the humanities in shaping immigration and refugee initiatives. Um, and then our scholars, are you going to respond for about 20-30 minutes. And then we're going to open it up to the public so you can start thinking about your questions now because I'm sure you all have a lot of questions. Without further ado, I would like to start introducing our scholars. First, I would like to introduce Meredith Oda, who is an associate professor of history. Her research is concerned with the emerging field of the Pacific world, particularly the ways in which transpacific networks are in development. So we're engaged in the local texture of cities, communities, and everyday life. Her book, "The gateway to the Pacific Japanese Americans and remaking of the transpacific San Francisco" by Chicago University press traces the development of San Francisco's postwar transpacific Urbanity. Um, and her book also is a very deep local study, Ah, that illuminates the many ways that people experience the world and make sense of global shifts through the familiar space of home, community and the city. Then we have, uh, Todd Sørensen who is an assistant professor of economics. Um, his research centers on migrants and the labor market specifically. Um, he, his most recent, uh, paper is titled 21st Century, Slow down the historic nature of recent declines and the growth of the immigration population in the United States and that was published and migration letters last year. Um, then we have professor, I said, Professor Nasia Anam who is a professor of English literature and Global Anglophone literature here at UNR. Um, all of them are at UNR, actually, sorry. Apologies. Um, her research examines were presentations on migration between Europe, South Asia, and with Africa and the

United States in the colonial, postcolonial and Contemporary Era's her current book manuscript titled “Other Cities, Muslims Migrations and space in the global model” centers on the figure of the urban Muslim migrant from the postwar to 9/11 eras in global anglophone and Francophone fiction. And then finally we have a graduate student in the Department of Communication Studies. Um, Michael Klajbor and his research focuses on the border and it's specifically looks at the rhetoric, uh, related to the border and US government policies-policies. His most recent conference paper is titled “the White House” examining-examining a racism, the Trump administration's border frame. So without further ado, I would read my little introduction in their market into the questions. Okay. In our panel today we're going to discuss the role of the humanities in shaping immigration and refugee initiatives. Specifically our discussion today seeks to address the role of the humanities and the multilayered ways migration is politicized. And diverse geopolitical context. First, we will address how the humanities plays a part in shaping of particular migrant movements. And identities to situate how it is that we understand migration. In other words, I want to us to think about how it is that we think about migration and also how do we use language to give people an identity that shapes narratives around the border control, the desirability and disposability of particular foreigners. Secondly, we will discuss how the humanities have examined colonization and aided our understanding of global human migration and how this impacts the economy in the United States and Europe. For instance, given some of the reasons, uh, as to why people migrate, including but not limited to wars, climate change, hate crimes, poverty, how is it that migrant and refugee populations are linked to economic interests? Finally, we will explore the humanities or their lack of has justified the creation of what Sayak Valencia in her book or capitalism calls the economies of death through what has been called the booming migrant industry, tension centers, asylum, immigration, fees, et cetera, et cetera. It is my hope that by focusing on these specific topics, we can illustrate unimportant, enriched conversations to running the interactions of the humanities and migration movements and the effects that these intersections have in our communities. So, without further ado, here's my first question for our scholars. What do you think is the role of the humanities and shaping immigration and refugee initiatives?

05:56 Meredith Oda: All right, so my colleagues here threw me under the bus and put me into the hot seat, so I'll go ahead and start. Um, and so I think, um, as far as the role of humanities, I think that historians- so I'm a historian- I think history gives us a sense, I mean obviously have history, examples to reconsider or avoid in the past. So I actually just had a conversation with a student earlier today talking about how I came to my second book project, which is looking at resettlement outside of the World War II, Japanese American incarceration camp. Um, and I was saying like how it came to that project and the, I think it was because, um, those topics seems so resonant today. So on the one hand, of course we have an example of the mass detention of an alien as well as citizen population, right, held in inland camps. Um, and it is also an example that has come up a lot today instead of recent policy debates as um, as an example from history, but one that somehow is sort of a positive one and in some policy circles as something that is, uh, sort of, um, conceptually available for reuse in today's, uh, climate or today's situation or context with, um, either refugees or Muslim immigrants or Latinx immigrants or immigrants coming across the southern border. So on the one hand, I was kind of really interested in this topic because I think it gives us some insight into, um, or clarification right into a topic that has in fact been studied a lot by historians. But if there's still room for policy makers to kind of come to that insane conclusion, then clearly there's still work to be done. Um, and also, uh, the other reason I

came to it was that, um, oh, it is an example too, of a group that was either alien or alienized. So Japanese Americans at a World War II, at the World War II period, right, were incarcerated 110,000 and turned in inland detention camps. Um, and three quart- let's see, two thirds of those were citizens, so American born citizens, but they were alienized. They were classified as enemy aliens despite their citizenship status and contrast to say German or an Italian Americans. Um, and so had their citizenship, in fact kind of stripped of them, right? And so treated as, and so we're able to be sort of put into camps, uh, in the inland center. And then also, um, aliens, Japanese aliens, uh, as most Asian migrants were, uh, up until World War II were ineligible for naturalization. So they couldn't naturalize. They couldn't become citizens if they wanted to. Um, so this is a period in which this group of people were either alienized or were made, rendered alien in various ways, um, and interned as a result or incarcerated as a result. Um, and so, you know, I can obviously gives us a sense of how that process of alienization works, but it also gives us an example that perhaps gives us some models to use or think about today because, um, all of those people, despite the fact that they were alienized they were also in part because of the way that the incarceration programs that have changed over time, um, were helped and assisted in massive ways to resettle in different parts of the country to leave camp and resettle in different parts of the country. So they were given financial assistance, housing assistance, educational assistance, medical assistance, all of which were well outside of what the average citizen would get right from, from the state. Um, even in this time of war, there was still, you know, they, so they had resources unavailable to them, um, that allowed them right to move into communities to form like methods, modes of belonging. Um, that were perhaps unexplored, um, were, uh, in- inaccessible to other, other migrant communities, again, despite their alien status. So in some ways, of course this is a reminder, a stark reminder of, I don't know, democracy gone awry or sort of the process of alienization and its ultimate conclusion, but also it gives us some possibility of how we can, um, and have in the past, despite the limitations of course, um, worked towards put resources towards right. The actual inclusion of aliens.

10:06 Lydia Huerta: Okay. Thank you very much.

10:08 Todd Sørensen: Hm. Okay. So the question was, you know, to, for us to explain what role the humanities have in shaping immigration refugee initiatives. I'm a social scientist, so I'm going to leave it to my log in with a couple of other questions, uh, to my colleagues here who are from the humanities, uh, to, to explain these. But I think what I will say, just my view is an economist and as a social scientist is that the social sciences are really complimentary to the humanities. Um, I think that we often- or the trade off I'll talk about here- but I think as economists we often ask very narrow questions, especially frankly as a labor economist, which is what I am. Um, but the flip side is that we focus really on precision getting like a, a very precise answer to something. I think I'm lucky to have a lot of friends that are in the humanities and other social sciences. So pretty woke for an economist to say that, you know, a lot of people don't believe in that there was one pure truth or objective truth, but there are facts and in order to arrive at your truth, you should be standing on a solid set of facts to get there. So I think a lot of our role is kind of finding relationships like cause and effect in economics. And even more so than that I think is there's maybe less agreement or less clarity on, on facts, often purposely in the world to just remind people of things. And a couple of papers. That one was mentioned in my, uh, my intro, things that I've worked on. It's just documenting. I almost feel like a demographer sometimes just looking at the rates of immigration. Immigration has slowed down incredibly in

the US in the last 20 years. And a lot of people don't know that. I mean there are recently maybe apprehensions or up at the border because people just walking up and turning themselves in often to try to get asylum, right? But the overall stock of the foreign born in the US is much lower. It's not lower. Excuse me, it's slowing down. In a recent paper, I've, I've seen that, um, the people who are migrants from Mexico, um, let's say the, the, the size of the migrant population from Mexico who was born in 1990 is much smaller than the size of the migrant population that was born in 1970. I can talk about some of the reasons why later. Um, and, uh, I, one of the things to say about that, um, to go like really into the weeds on one of my papers, which is exactly what you're not supposed to do at one of these events, right? In this paper we look separate paper, the migration letters one, we're looking at just documenting how historic the "slow down" is and what we call deceleration. So the immigration, the stock of foreign born population is still growing, but it's growing at a, at a faster rate, your car is still going forward, but it slowed down. That slow down between the 90's and the 21st century is the quickest slow down we've ever seen. And we actually see some decrease in the stock of immigrants, adult immigrants who are over 30, excuse me, under 30. We saw that before in the 1920s or 30's. And that was a leading indicator by about two decades of when the actual stock of foreign born, uh, individuals in the West, uh, uh, started to decline. Um, so I'll just, I'll pass on to Nasia now, but uh, I'll, maybe I'll talk a little bit more about those things there.

13:22 Lydia Huerta: Thank you Todd.

13:23 Nasia Anam: Okay. Um, well I'm going to do the kind of very boring thing of read off of my notes so that I don't miss anything but also the, so the, I don't ramble, but this is a thing that I feel like is coming up in a lot of different conferences that I've been to recently, particularly in terms of literature because it can really seem frivolous at times to be focusing on something like the arts or literature when the world seems to be on fire. So, um, I mean quite literally a lot of the time. But um, so the question of literature in particular, um, I've been thinking about it and this is also very nerdy and kind of old fashioned, but I'm thinking about it in terms of the Marxist literary critic rate, Raymond Williams. He has this idea of structures of feeling, um, which to put it simply pertains to emergent or in co-eight ways of thinking that don't quite have shape yet, sort of things that are information, but we can't make empirical or definitive statements about them because they're kind of still plastic, kind of still happening. So the power of art and of Literature in particular is to articulate a cultural or societal phenomenon that is still in process. It's still taking shape. So in terms of the migrant crisis, recent like Mosan Hamid's "exit west", that came out a couple of years ago, which depicts the scenario of millions of migrants seeking refuge in Europe or the US or Australia from war torn Islamic countries using a magical realist style or Uri Herrera's signs proceeding end of the world that uses the US Mexico border as an allegory for crossing the border from the land of the living into the afterlife. Um, these texts do not only give us representations of the migrant experience, they give us insight into the subjectivity of the migrant. They give us ways of thinking about really complex issues like human rights, identity, assimilations, uniphobia, et cetera. Moreover, literature gives us a space in which we can process these ideas with nuance and ambiguity. And I think this gets at what Todd was saying. Um, what is important about literature is that it does not demand declarations of yes or no, or good or bad or legal or illegal or right or wrong. It's a space in which complex the complexity of the situation can be represented and thought through in all its complexness.

16:03 Lydia Huerta: Thank you.

16:07 Michael Kjalbor: Well, someone who is still a, it's beginning to engage in the humanities as an interdisciplinary scholar in communication. I think that the, the easiest way that I can start off answering this question is that I really appreciate that the humanities is the general ask the question, why? Why do we use certain terms? Why do we, you know, frame a certain migrant, you know, conversations in a, in a way that, you know, say in the public discourse today? Why do we frame it as a crisis? Um, I'm thinking, you know, I think that the humanities regularly engage more than other disciplines in reflexive thinking and thinking about the terms and the, um, the ideas that are kind of hegemonic, uh, within our cultures. So thinking about the terms legal and illegal, uh, even in talking about, uh, Mexico to the US, Mexico migration, what do those terms really mean? You know, those terms are not, they're not set in stone. They're not things that we can, you know, point to over history and say, oh, this is a state. Exactly the same over time we've changed those categories. We've changed them for political reasons. We changed them for social reasons. And that's an important conversation to have. You know, without, you know, history, without English, we wouldn't be having those conversations. We'd be using terms instead of discussing terms and, and the research I'm doing, I really try to focus on that as, you know, what is legality? What is illegality? How do we define those in, why are we defining them in a certain way? So thinking about just the last couple of years, um, a person who could, who could have come through as a legal asylum seeker, you know, three years might not make it through today, but is that person, you know, is the person that came in three years ago legal, quote unquote, or have the terms changed and do we need to talk about it differently? And that's the conversations that I think is like humanities have that other disciplines don't. You know, you can talk a little, you know, when you talk in a social science, you know, way sometimes. Sometimes we get hung up on, you know, keeping the terms the same two prove an empirical point. And we don't have that reflexive conversation. We don't really think about the ideas that we have in our own heads about, about even in the terms that we use. Um, and I think that more and more this is going to become a discussion in the public sphere, um, of the fact that the humanities are needed. And I think that one of the biggest problems with that we're facing right now is that the humanities had been removed from the conversations that we have about migration, from the conversations that we have about the idea of legitimacy in the state. Um, we're focusing more and more on these, you know, on just accepting the terms at face value rather than having the conversations around the terms themselves.

18:55 Lydia Huerta: Thank you, Michael. So I'm gonna move on to the next question and I'm going to ask you all to be mindful of the time. So I'm going to ask you to keep it to maybe two minute responses. I thought I'd, I kind of let you all talk with the first question because it's an important question. Um, but I would like if you could be a little more succinct in your responses. So the next question I'm going to ask is, um, how has the humanities explore the concept of human colonization in order to help us understand the dynamics of global human migration and refugee aid? Um, specifically what are some of factors that contribute to the increase and decrease as immigrant populations?

19:38 Meredith Oda: I'll be on the spot or anything. Um, okay. I will try. I will try to be quick. Um, okay. So just in terms of the cultural legacies of colonization, people from former colonies would naturally be inclined to migrate to their former imperial metropolitan hubs because of

shared language and some shared cultural familiarity. And this accounts for what we might think of as the patterns of migration that happened after World War II, particularly in, um, in western Europe. So Britain and France, they saw a lot of, uh, former colonial subject streaming into those countries because of the, the legacy of being colonized by those former imperial hubs. But then there's the question of sort of why are they compelled to leave in the first place? Why are they compelled to migrate from the postcolonial world? And that has to do with the economic input and political legacies of colonization, not just the cultural ones. So nations that used to be extraction colonies, like in the Caribbean, India, Africa, et Cetera, had very little in the way of industrial development during colonial era. And, um, their own industries were set up around very few exportable goods. And so they weren't set up to be self-sufficient. So once a decolonization happened and they were, um, sovereign nation states on their own, they had to borrow money from their former colonial hubs. So this accounts for things like the IMF and the World Bank and all of these countries become borrower countries, which perpetuates the structures of colonization without the governance of colonization, so that's what we call neocolonialism. Um, and what happens when countries are impoverished? You know, they have political unrest, they have violence, they have drought, they have warfare, they have all kinds of reasons why those countries would no longer be ones in which people would feel comfortable living. And so there is a natural inclination to move towards more prosperous nations. Those are obviously the ones that used to be, um, the colonial centers and also a lot of the skirmishes, a lot of the unrest that happens in terms of, um, borders happen because those borders were drawn by the former imperial powers with little regard for the cultures on the ground. So, so there's a lot of reasons why, um, the legacies of colonization would contribute to the way that mass migration works in our contemporary moment.

22:15 Lydia Huerta: Would any of you would like to add anything or are you okay? If you want to add, you can. Okay.

22:24 Todd Sørensen: Okay. I'll, I'll say four B. So the, uh, the second part of the question was, um, what are some factors that contribute to the increase or decrease of immigrant populations? So just say that that's what it's called, kind of the, the new economics of immigration, which was a term coined in the 70s. It's not that new anymore, but, um, you know, what identity matters and um, can of where people fit in culturally or where they proceeded if it in culturally does matter for migration. A large driver of migration is economic and people just wanting better opportunities. Um, economists and demographers who look at, um, migration tend to think of things being divided into push and pull factors. Um, so I would say when I was discussing earlier about the work that I had been doing with Adrianna Hernandez as if now at Cornell, a former Grad student here, um, on declining in Mexican migration, no, a lot of that is driven by massive decreases in, in birth rates of Mexican women over a 20 or 30 year period. Right? So you have less people born in the country, there's less people who are going to be moving to a receiving country. Um, jobs are a big thing on the, on the pole side. And I think what's really interesting and important about the type of research that myself and mainly others are doing on this is that if you see, and we do in the data that um, let's say especially low educated native born men have not been having good labor market outcomes. That's often, let's say a trigger for his, you know, xenophobia. And people often say, well that's because immigrants are taking their jobs away. Well, what we show in our research is that low educated Mexican men are coming to the United States at a much lower rate than they used to. And that suggests that there's something structural

happening in, in the labor market. Some of that is the great recession and the in the construction automation maybe trade to some extent. Um, but yeah, so in summary, I would just say that economic factors are really important to drive migration flows between countries and um, it's often common trends affecting both natives and immigrants as much or more so than natives being affected by immigrants.

24:28 Meredith Oda: Okay. You can't shut us up.

24:30 Lydia: No, it's okay. I'm actually, I'm really happy because some of you provided answers for the next question so I can, I can moderate it. So don't worry, just keep going.

24:40 Meredith Oda: We ramble. I'm okay. Because I just wanted to add in, cause I'm like a historical perspective because, um, I mean, so there's, uh, economic ties are just one of the ways in which people form connections between countries right before they even leave a country to the country that they're going to. Because as I say again and again in my classes, no one randomly picks the country to go to, right? They go because they have some kind of tie, whether it's information or kin or, um, culture or, or jobs like labor recruitment are longstanding ties, right? People go because they know something about the place. I mean, even the most dire refugee is going to go someplace that they, that they know of, right? That's why, for example, Syrians, um, don't say in Turkey, but move on to leave Hungary for example, or move on to say, either the Norwegian countries or Britain or something where they know they have a better social, a social safety net. So there's these ties that are really important to understanding why people leave. And those ties, um, are often cultivated or bedded in past connections, right? So when we think about, for example, to current day labor and migrations are current day a migration, particularly across the US southern border, a lot of that is because we have a longstanding history of labor migration between Mexico and the United States. I mean, of course, a lot of the part that Mexican migraines are going to your word was in fact previously part of Mexico. But even after that, right? They're going because there was specific labor recruitment drives to bring Mexican workers to the United States over and over again for a generation. So that you set up ties, you said, you know, communication ties, you set up practices, you set up habits, you create job opportunities at home that were overlooked because of better wages that drew, and we're meant to lore, right, workers up to the United States. And so those are migrations, those are networks and connections that continue on even if laws change. Right? And so a lot of what moving this is, is that those forms of connection, so whether they are labor, whether they're just cultural, right? If people are watching TV and seeing the sort of pictures of affluence and abundance, right? The sort of of opportunity that we like to project that is of course going to be at the form of soft power. That's a form of attraction, right? Which too can be a sort of network that that draws people to a particular country.

26:55 Lydia Huerta: Thank you Meredith. Michael, do you have anything to add? Sure.
26:59 Michael Kjalbor: I don't have as much to ramble on. I'm still learning. So I'm sure as a fight if I had this, yeah, I'm sure once I get a few years down, I'll be rambling along with the best of them. Um, but I think, I, I, I agree with everything that's been said here. And also I think an important conversation to have is, you know, this structural idea of the border itself, um, and how that, you know, changes migration. And to think about, you know, the Bracero program that wasn't, that was what, less than a hundred years ago. And to think that that is something that we,

we just kind of forget about, you know, that, you know, that when we talk about why people are coming over the border now, we don't think about the fact that, you know, two generations ago we were asking these people to come in. We were, you know, we were bringing them in because they were an economic value to us. Um, and those are conversations that I think that the humanities, uh, can really can really help. Um, if we forget the history of why people came in the first place, then we, you know, we have the public discourse that we have now of thinking that these migrants are just mass hordes of, you know, mindless bodies that are, you know, walking across the border on mass. That's not the reality. These people are rational actors. They're rational human beings. They're coming here for a reason. And the humanities provide us an insight into why, into, you know, what are some of the structural and current reasons that they're coming over at all.

28:27 Lydia Huerta: Thank you Michael. So I'm in the, your response as you all sort of touching the economics of migration of a little bit. So I'm, for that will be my last question. I wanted to ask you all, there's a lot of conversation about how migrants take away from people to take away people's jobs, take away from their communities, use resources from the United States. And there's a lot out there. Um, but I was wondering if you could comment on how your research, and in a way it has manifested something different to that. Basically how you have seen migrants impact then the communities in which they find themselves in. And also, uh, in a way stand up to the, this new economy of detention centers where it's not really new granted, but this idea of the tension that doesn't tie them fees, migration fees that have been named as economies of death because you're basically setting people up to fail. Um, so I was wondering if you all could elaborate on that and that'll be my last question and then I'll open up to the public.

29:27 Michael Klajbor: Sure. Why not? I think it's one of the unfortunate reality is a little thing in a capitalistic world that, you know, especially in the United States, that we think about things in terms economic value. That's our first instinct is to come at something from an an economic bend. So when we see migrants, our first thought is, well, what are they providing to the community? You know, what are they, what are they giving us in return for all, you know, graciously allowing them to, you know, cross into our land. Um, and I think, you know, some of the research that I've been doing recently and just the thoughts that I've been having, uh, uh, have been kind of turned towards, you know, fighting that reality, thinking about the idea of, you know, uh, what would it mean to look at a brown body, a brown immigrant body and say, this is not just an economic factor. Um, and the conversations that we can have around that. Um, and I think also part of my work is just deconstructing and illuminating the, where did that comes up, even if it's not absolutely clear. So in the most recent paper that I hopefully will be presenting at a conference in the next semester, um, I, uh, talk about the white, the White House's Admin, the White House administration’s border framework, which is a document that they released that basically goes over their ideal border situation. And so the, the reality is that they want to see going forward with that. And one of the conversations that I have is this conversation of pointing of out the fact that, you know, we've reframed our narratives to make it look like that we're not just viewing these people as economic factors, but we've, we've shadowed it. You know, we've, we've made it seem like, um, it's a conversation about, you know, their ability to, you know, exist in the United States. They're, you know, they're fit, their adaptability, but it's not, it's just the same scripts that have been used over and over again to talk about it. But we started to hide it. And part of what I hope to do in my, in my research in the future is to eliminate that and to make

the conversation known that, you know, this is not some ambivalent conversation we're having. We're still talking about people as economic factors. Um, and while I'm still a scholar in training, I hope that one day that turns into something, I hope that one day we can, you know, start to anal- you know, see that in the rhetoric that's being used and especially in the public, you know, debate sphere in the next election. I hope that the moderators and the people that are, you know, have the power to ask these questions. And so, you know, dissect that bet, uh, rhetoric a little more. Start to see that as well.

32:16 Lydia Huerta: Thank you, Michael.

32:22 Nasia Anam: I guess in particular with literature it becomes clear maybe more than other fields or in the arts in general, what effect of a substantial immigrant population can have on cultural production? I mean, it shows up in terms of like what's being represented, who the prominent authors are. So my research has thus far been largely centered on Britain and France. And a lot, particularly if you think about Britain, a lot of the most prominent British writers nowadays are from some kind of migrant extraction. Um, and I mean, it is interesting to think about how that gets naturalized in some ways. And then it's almost like there's a sudden reassessing of, of what has happened to Britishness or Frenchness or Americanness where it's like everybody looks around and they're like, well, wait a minute. What's going on? Why is our national food curry instead of fish and chips all of a sudden? So, um, so I think that that's, that's a really interesting turn that's happening now because I think in the 80's, 90's, and even maybe early 2000's there was a kind of embrace in general of multiculturalism or cosmopolitanism, which I feel like has swung in the complete opposite direction recently. And the question is sort of why, why is the reaction now to an integrated culture, a heterogeneous culture? Why is the reaction all of the sudden recently this strong nativist voice that wants to preserve what was British, what was French, undiluted and even more problematically what was American where it's just like, what are you even talking about? Like what, what, what does that, what are you referring to? So, um, so I mean I think that that's, that's what's really interesting and troubling to me right now is what has caused that shift from a sort of 90's embrace of multiculturalism to the strength of nativism. Now.

34:34 Todd Sørensen: To go off my script a little bit to engage on this cause I think we had this conversation the first time we met and I, I'm a pessimist but I play an optimist when I'm in front of other people. Um, one thing that I think is really interesting to think about the 1990s and see if anybody in the audience has this, what, which state was kind of infamous for the most anti-immigrant and maybe anti informative action measures in-California. And as somebody who's, you know, who my spouse's from California, um, second generation on one side and had a Palestinian father who moved there in the 1970s and I have family in California going back a long time and lived there for seven years. I, I, if I'm being optimistic, I think that there's, um, California has been majority minority for a long time and it was around that time that switch happened that you had a lot of xenophobia and racism. And my hope is that the country is currently transitioning to let's say maybe a period where some people irrationally feel some threats about culture to a period where people are going to be hopefully more accepting and multiculturalism because I feel that the Los Angeles I lived in was not perfect. But, um, what you're describing about the 1990s, I felt like it was there. I don't know. You, you live there too. And we can-

35:53 Nasia Anam: No, no, I didn’t live there in the 90’s.

35:55 Todd Sørensen: Yeah. Um, and I probably took most of the time talking about that.

35:56 Lydia Huerta: Um, you can continue. We have time. Don’t worry.

35:57 Todd Sørensen: So I mean, I will say that I engage on the, you know, I think here I am with a bunch of people for the piano. He's right. And I think it is important to think of people as humans who are moving to countries to better themselves. And from a global perspective that's, you know, immigration is not just good for immigrants. It's also one of the best ways to decrease global income inequality. You have some countries that are richer in some countries that are poor, and if the people move from the poor to the rich countries that in the long run will decrease global inequality. Um, I think kind of in the current political climate, and let's say that maybe some politicized discussion of economics, not among academic economists, but there's a very zero sum game feeling in the world right then. And I just said, immigrants benefit from moving to the US. And I think the knee jerk reaction by a lot of people is therefore NATO's must be losing. And that's just not true. Um, I think two or three things I'll try to say briefly about the importance of immigration to the US uh, one the United States is not facing a demographic crisis. Like a lot of western Europe is like, we, we have people and we're replacing people dying with people being born mostly either because of immigration or because of the, the children of immigrants. Uh, two, um, labor is just a valuable asset for the economy, right? Like there's definitely evidence that a high skilled immigrants innovate and create goods and services or let's say intellectual property, which spills over and helps the economy as a whole. Uh, and the third thing, which I think is often overlap, uh, looked, uh, Patricia Cortez at a university where she now, BU, I think has written a lot on this. Um, the experience of American women in the labor market or women living in the United States and labor market is very different than that of women in Europe if they want to have families. And a main reason for that is that there is a greater availability of goods and services that traditionally had been expected for women to produce in the home. Those can be outsourced. If you're talking about housekeeping, childcare, just being able to, to eat out. Uh, because we have a, a migrant flow that provides those goods and services, um, to be sure there may be some costs of immigration. There's economist, we often think about costs and benefits, right? Just cause their costs doesn't mean something's not worthwhile. There's, um, and people often bring up, you know, immigrants and their children to school and that cost taxpayers money. You can make the same argument about anybody from the United States who has a child. They're creating a demand for public services. Um, there is a little bit of evidence that a low skilled natives might be hurt by to some extent by immigration, but it's not a large wage effect. Um, economists have really, and I should say it's by summit events. It's controversial and it's kind of maybe 20% of-of my field, about 80% has looked at what we call natural experiments, the Mariel boatlift from Cuba. And it's kind of the quintessential example of this. You have a 7% shock in the labor supply in Miami and we just don't really seem to change that much. And just having a flexible economy, which comes with some costs that we do, but kind of liberal labor market just means that things adjust. And natives, I mean kind of the old adage of immigrants do the job that nobody else wants to do. Like there's truth to that. The natives kind of upskill or, or specialize in jobs which require proficiency in culture or the English language. Um, so I would just say overall there's mostly positive effects of immigration

economically, which is not the only reason to support immigrants. But I think in terms of selling that to the typical voter, uh, that's an important argument to make for people to understand what this pol-, how these policies really matter for them.

39:35 Meredith Oda: Okay. I just have two quick points to make. The first is to that question directly, which is how, um, so in my research, I can see, I have two examples from my research where I can see the way in which immigrants have benefited the localities and I'm looking at it. So on the one hand, San Francisco, right? This is the classic, essentially know what we now think of as like a cosmopolitan, richly Asian cultural city. Right? And that is of course, because of the Chinatown community, which was rabidly robustly and violently segregated, but nonetheless became a crucial part of the culture of San Francisco. Right? Even as early as the 1860's people were saying, oh, you can't visit San Francisco without seeing Chinatown. It'd be like going to Rome and not seeing the pope. Um, and so, and that's the same also with the Japanese what is now Japantown. Um, and so obviously they have contributed like even that the most vilified and hated migrant community in San Francisco, which was the heart of anti-Asian movement, even, they like check dramatically changed San Francisco into what we see today. Right. And then also in, so in my second project, I look at similarly these aliens, right? And I'm using the term, uh, conscientiously, but I'm using it consciously, I guess. Um, right. They move into Chicago and other cities. Um, and in so doing like in as one might expect, like having gone through the, the, um, experience of being incarcerated and detained and separated from the rest of the community, uh, the rest of the country, um, were found that one way to kind of carve out a place for themselves in these communities was by sort of responding to the obligations of citizenship, citizenship, like contribution. Like, um, often in terms of sort of cultural contributions like showing the cosmopolitanism of the Chicago or Cleveland or wherever they're going. This is a particular point in time in which that kind of thing was particularly valued, I guess. Kind of like the 90s. Um, and so that's on one hand so we can see right specific instances in which migrants in fact have contributed robustly to the particular place that they went to. Um, and then I also for my second points ask, I guess kind of like Todd was doing, like why we would ask that question, why would place that additional burden right on migrants that we wouldn't place on any average American born person, right. That they would, we have to, they like us are just humans. Why would we expect them to, you know, pay somehow for their presence here in the United States in ways of that we don't, again, so like people, I don't know, like myself just like reproducing and turning out babies. Just the one. But nonetheless. So, you know, so finally I would just sort of end on that. I guess that, you know, why should we place this additional burden on, on a group of people who again are sort of coming here to participate in communities as anyone else. Ideally it.

42:13 Lydia Huerta: Thank you Meredith. Thank you everyone. I'm going to open the floor up for questions from the audience. If you have any questions feel free to come up and ask him on the mic so everybody can hear you. Uh, or if you have a loud voice you can just scream it and we have about 20 minutes to do that and then we'll close out. So any, any questions?
42:42 Audience Member: I love your just rambling because I love this topic. So I was very, oh I was like very interesting. But um, I'm going to like read like a quote that I saw, well not a quote but like a tweet that I'm kind of struck me with guilt being like the daughter of two immigrants, but someone wrote, my parents were tasked with the job of survival and I with self-actualization, the immigrant get generational gap is real. What a luxury it is to search for purpose, meaning and

fulfillment. And I was wondering if anyone, if anyone could speak more on that, about like the idea of the immigrant generational gap.

43:30 Meredith Oda: It does speak for your, but actually it does it remind you of a Milli- Mindy Kaling joke from her, her show 'em the Mindy project in which she, uh, she was a doctor, but like with, you know, a very flamboyant one and like to dress and talk and stuff like that. And she met an Indian migrants who was also going through the same medical program that she was in the Indian migraine. And it's like, oh, you second generation. You just like, you're so, you know, I don't know. You throw money around and you don't care. And we had to work. Um, and then Mindy Kaling says, well, I'll just, you wait, your son is going to be a dj.

44:16 Nasia Anam: Well, to my parents, I'm basically a dj. So I mean, I, I don't know how to answer your question other than to say like, yes, yes, true. It's, it's, that's deep. Like it's very, very real. But I mean the question of guilt, I mean what's, what's the kernel that we would want to get at with your question? Like what, which part of your question do you want answered?

44:31 Audience Member 1: I guess like to discuss more about the idea of it. Like if you both like aren't aware of it cause like I realize that listen you guys are like now like what was that like that idea of like the difference and like how people might not know.

44:45 Nasia Anam: Yeah. I mean I think the question of survival for the first generation of immigrants is a really interesting one because it's not simply like survival in terms of economic survival in terms of making enough money to pay rent or buy groceries or whatever. But it's also survival. Meaning cultural survival meaning like how do you get through your day every day without getting, you know, verbally attacked or how do you get through your day every day without being the target of a micro aggressions at work or macro aggressions at work. Like there is this way in which the first generation has to have the attitude of just put your head down and get through it. And I think that the question of self-actualization is so interesting for the second generation because it becomes a sort of like how do you get out of survival mode? And what that really gets to is that migration is a kind of trauma, you know, like you have to get past that trauma and getting past trauma is the work of many, many generations. And so yeah, like it, you, you duke it out with your parents, but that's also a really productive work. And then you become a DJ or a professor. Thank you.

46:04 Audience Member 2: Um, I have a loud voice. I'm just going to stay here. Kind of going with like the generational idea. How does the humanities and just scholarship in general start defining generation and how do we talk about the millennial gen Z or even in the immigrant communities? We have first generation, second generation, but right now we're seeing a lot of 1.5 generation where a first generation parents bring their young children and uh, but they're seven years old, five years old. So they grow up, not citizens, but also American. So how do the humanities add to this discussion?
46:42 Todd Sørensen: Well, let me tell you what the social scientists do and then they can deconstruct it for me. I'm six years old. It means you're 1.5 generation if you moved at six or uh, or younger. Um, that's how often I kind of here in just speaking with non-academics, people will say I'm first generation when we would say when Labor economist at least would say second, right? So people who, who are the children of immigrants in academia, we typically refer to a

second generation. Um, I will say that, you know, economist, um, do look at issues of identity and I, one of my favorite papers on immigration is by Steve Trey Ho. And um, I forget his coauthor on him and he's at UT Austin. And if I'm remembering it correctly, they were trying to explain this achievement gap in where second or third-you know, this paper- second or third generation, um, Asian Americans do better than second or third generation Mexican Americans and they have a unique data set where they can look at what's the current population survey where if you're still living at home we can see your parents' place of birth. And because we asked that question, do your parents, their parents' place of birth and what they find essentially is that, um, I'll try to word this carefully, but I guess just to be blunt about it, like the more successful you are, the more likely you are to keep identifying as Asian and the more successful you are, the least likely you are to keep generally keep identifying as Hispanic or Latino, Latinx if you're of partial ancestry. So I think it is really interesting to study not just where you fit in in, in terms of lineage, but just the self-identification that comes along with it. Going back to kind of the economics of that because that really matters because you can miss measure it, you can get a fact wrong on that. Then once you account for that self-selection with migration, third generation Mexican Americans look like they're doing just as well as everybody else.

48:32 Audience Member 3: [Inaudible]

49:01 Michael Kjalbor: Sure. That's a great question. Um, and that's something that I've, I had been learning about too. And I think more than anything, it's really important in this day and age to understand that the border is not a static concept. Uh, the border is a social construct that has been constructed over time and changes. Uh, we reorient the border based on the societal and political needs at the time. So, um, there are large swaths of the US Mexico border that are not patrolled. They're not fenced, but we call it a border. And that's, you know, that's, that's something that, um, I've been struggling with of like, how do we talk about a border if it doesn't actually exist? And I think one of the biggest conversations that needs to happen today, and one of the conversations that I think is that a reorientation that's happening, at least in the communication field, is not only talking about the border as a concept, as a physical line, but also talking about the border as a social construct and something that follows people over time. So these invisible borders that are created when we classify a group of people as you know, immigrants, um, how does that follow them? Uh, thinking about even the university, the experience of a DACA student here is going to be markedly different than the experience of, of, uh, of a citizen. You know, who comes in to learn at this university. They're going to have different, um, they're going to have different worries. They're going to have things that they can't let go of because they're, you know, because of their legal status and also their connection to another country. Um, and I think that's, you know, that's where we need to focus is not only talking about the border as you know, the wall that's being built, but also talking about the border as you know, the borders between people who are here and the borders between people, um, that we self-create. Um, does that answer your question? Is that a, is that what you're going for?
51:00 Audience Member 4: Saw this great paper a few weeks ago about El Chamizal, the region between where the Rio Grande was- Oh, sorry, this is just a great example about how borders are constructions- El Chamizal- and how when the border was initially declared, it was declared to be the Rio Grande River. The river doesn't stay in place, the river moves and so an area that was once, I think, was first, the US then became Mexico because the river moved then the US took it back from Mexico and they had to put in a concrete border to make sure the river wouldn't move

anymore. And even just thinking about how borders, something we think is natural right, like rivers, they move, they shift, they change and that's how borders are as well, they are not something that are natural, concrete things in place unless you actually lay down a concrete track and force the river to stay in one place so, I don't know, that's a great example of how borders are.

52:10 Meredith Oda: Um, I also just wanted to add that, we can think of the border as imaginary, we can think of the border as constantly shifting in space but also geopolitically, the border is everywhere. Literally, it's everywhere. Every single international airport is an international borderline, you cross the border when you go past customs. And if you are worried about documentation, yes the border is everywhere because you can get apprehended anywhere, so at once, the border is arbitrary or imaginary but it's also becoming like, it proliferates, becoming infinite basically. It is so imaginary as to be able to be drawn anywhere geopolitically. And that was also what was so interesting about the government shutdown because it was about the border wall. But that means who was furloughed were TSA workers, who were not able to patrol the borders at every single international airport so and that's where most migrants come in. So it's actually what you were doing, you were opening up the borders even more, so good job, president. Um, if I could just add something, so now the border is completely pervasive but it also doesn't have to be that way and it wasn't always the case, right, so up until 1882, there was no- there was no, I mean, up until- yes 1882, we just had an open door policy so if you could get to the United States anywhere, you were free to come. There was no way, no physical way to police all the borders of the country and nor was there any desire to because there was always an assumption that well, one, we need their labor, this is fine and also, there was no sense of threat. Well, no, that's not entirely true, course there was xenophobia throughout US history but um, there was no sense of threat to the extent that a certain, that any particular group or immigrants in general needed to be excluded. Um, and that only came about with the first restrictive policy that we had, which was the Chinese exclusion act or Chinese restriction act in 1882 which classified for the first time a group, a specific group based on race that needed to be, they were defined as so dangerous alien unassimilable that they needed to be kept out. Um, and up until that point, again, there wasn't a sense that national like actually I just heard Stephen Miller on the radio saying national saw this, this is about national sovereignty. We have to collect correct, cajole or borders because it was about national sovereignty. But again, up until 1882, there was no set, there was no conflation between patrolling borders, controlling borders, immigration restriction and national sovereignty. There was no one to one correlation. And as a matter of fact, in an immigration was a process of diplomacy, it was a bilateral agreement. It was something that two countries would agree on, not one country deciding unilaterally we don't want migrants from here or here or everywhere or we're going to restrict it. Right. So it doesn't have to be that way. Right. It comes across, it came out around and American history and actually that sense of restriction and then moved around the world, um, in large part because of race and actually racism, right. As the fact, as a, as a way to control, um, what American saw as this dangerous group, Chinese. Um, and then other countries followed Australia, South Africa, all around the Anglophone Pacific, um, and the, uh, and Mexico and other parts of Latin America as well. So, um, yeah, it doesn't have to be at the borders everywhere, but it doesn't have to be that. And it's a relatively recent development.

55:39 Lydia Huerta: Okay, we have time for one more question. Yes?

55:42 Audience Member 5: Okay, so as a future healthcare professional, I wonder if and how illegal immigrants can use the healthcare system and how can you alleviate these costs while still insuring these individuals [inaudible]

55:55 Todd Sørensen: Uh, I mean, I'll, let's talk about, one other thing for is I want to talk about legal migration. My wife's a physician in, in northern Nevada, and I know she works with residents and many are foreign born and disproportionately a lot of them are Iraqi or Syrian. So I think that's one point is that if you want a Muslim ban, wait longer for a doctor. Right? Um, I mean there's costs of these things. Right? Um, I, that's one thing that I was wanting to write down some numbers on when I was my research today. The evidence of overall use of public services by, uh, on an authorizer, undocumented immigrants. It's, it does not seem like that's the biggest problem in healthcare in the United States. Um, I think there are policies that you could pursue. Where are you? Uh, I believe covered California allows people who are undocumented to buy in and it's very much like drivers licenses. If you don't want a bunch of people driving around without licenses because they're undocumented, um, you can allow undocumented people to have driver's licenses and just doing things which kind of regularize or bring people out of the shadows. Um, especially in the context of, I don't know the law in this right now. I think we still have an individual mandate, um, can help to solve that problem of on universal coverage.

57:21 Michael Kjalbor: I think one thing, um, it was also important to remember is that either way, uh, if, if, you know, immigrant immigrants that use the health care system or they do not in some way the state ends up paying it for it anyways. Um, it is much more dangerous for society to have a group of unhealthy people who are fearful to use the public resources that they have than to have a group of healthy people who might be using some economic, you know, using some level of societal resource. Uh, and I think that, uh, one of the conversations that I hope that the healthcare industry has and hopefully the federal government has, is talking about assuaging fears in migrant communities, particularly undocumented communities and using these public resources and going to the hospital when you need to because these people have a right to live. Um, they have a human right to, you know, have a basic level of human care and to be cared for. Um, and I think it's a conversation that needs to happen at that level of, you know, why, why are these people so afraid to use the resources that we provide to every citizen in the United States, every person in the United States.

58:37 Lydia Huerta: Thank you, Michael. Fire response. I want to thank everybody for being here today. How's the want to thank every one of our panelists and I want to leave you with a couple of things. One, illegality is a construct. Therefore, humans aren't illegal. Actions are illegal. We put those together to exclude people. So think about that for a second before engaging in the rhetoric of illegals versus aliens, et Cetera, et cetera. Secondly, I would like to invite you to think about how people who migrate to this country experience things differently. And thirdly, I would really like to invite you to look at scholarship like Gloria Anzaldua, indigenous scholars like a Nick Estes who have done the work of looking at borders from very different perspectives than white men. It's very important to look at that scholarship because it makes our understanding better. Thank you for coming.

END.