

*The Truth About Immigration: Why Successful Societies Welcome Newcomers* by Zeke Hernandez, Wharton professor

Summary of program co-sponsored by Gwynedd Monthly Meeting and Project Libertad of Norristown held on September 18, 2025 at Gwynedd Meeting

I mentioned at a Western Quarter committee meeting that I had attended this presentation at Gwynedd. Friends asked that I share my notes.

The program originated when a Friends at Gwynedd Meeting decided on a group read to help them understand more about the realities of immigration, especially the economic impact of immigration on the US economy. Friends settled on reading a book by an economist and business management professional, *The Truth About Immigration* by Zeke Hernandez.

Professor Hernandez spoke for about 25 minutes before focusing on answering questions. In his talk he gave background to three common misconceptions about immigration:

- 1) Immigrants take jobs away from non-immigrants;
- 2) Immigrants rely on welfare so live off of non-immigrant tax dollars
- 3) Bad actors are taking advantage of our lack of immigration laws and enforcement.

Professor Hernandez explained that immigrants are an overall net positive to the US economy. Their presence fills needed jobs and skills across all levels of the economy and hold a disproportionately higher number of jobs in STEM and AI, fields that non-immigrants are not present in; immigrants are 80% more likely to start a business; and for every 1% of our population from a foreign country that nation is 50% more likely to invest in the US. Immigrants and non-immigrants come together to create businesses that support each community and even meld different communities together.

Addressing the second point, Hernandez drew attention to the reality that immigrants are indeed more than just labor, the assumption underlying the first myth. Immigrants not only work, they consume as well, in consuming they pay taxes on the goods and services they use. They also invest in the economy, creating a bigger economy for all with more resources for all. It is also worth noting that while eligibility for assistance programs vary by state, a clear majority of both adult and child food aid recipients were born in the United States – 82.3% and 97.1%, respectively (Pew Research Center, 2023).

On the third point Hernandez pointed out the assumption underlying the myth that bad actors are taking advantage of a lack of laws is that our system of immigration makes sense and is orderly. The US has increased enforcement of immigration laws since 1965. The other reality is that the US has few ways of providing a legal pathway to immigration and citizenship, and they were last updated in 1990. We have zero visas for farmworkers, carpenters, plumbers, and there is a 198 year wait for masters degree trained engineers while US labor demands are high for those skills and the legal supply is low.

*The Truth About Immigration: Why Successful Societies Welcome Newcomers*. Zeke Hernandez. St. Martin's Press. 2024. ISBN-13: 978-1250288240.

<https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/07/19/what-the-data-says-about-food-stamps-in-the-u-s/>

