



The 12th Annual Water Assembly
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Subprime Water Crisis

Consequences of Too Many Uses

Kathleene Parker

Kathleene Parker: [material missing] ...former State Department official and author on population, and also Dr. Don Spencer, Professor Emeritus out of Princeton, who was a mentor to *A Beautiful Mind's* John Nash. Don told me he always thought Paul [Erlich?] was a bit of a nutcase on population, but one day at Stanford, he and Paul had lunch together, and knowing that Don was a mathematician, Paul showed exponential, global, and U.S. population growth to Don in equations. Don said he was so rattled that from that day forward, he too became a population activist. Don and I did a lot of work together until his death about four years ago.

[slide] I hope you can see the Viewgraphs. I'll try to give you the information in words, too. This is a graph from the *Albuquerque Journal* that was run in 2002. If you remember, there was severe drought in the region, and this graph shows what is drought and what isn't drought in the southwest. The main thing you need to follow is this dotted line right here; the dips below that are severe drought. The point this graph makes is that 2000 to 2002, by the standards of what the southwest can bring, wasn't really a severe drought. This was in the spring, and by the time 2002 was over, I imagine it was down in this range here, because it was more or less equal to the worst of the 1950s drought, which was 1956.

I have a favorite quote here. It's from rancher Gaylan Stewart, of Spanish Forks, Utah. He says, "California and the rest of the southwest have increased the population beyond the water-carrying capacity, and we are only one severe drought away from disaster." If you look at what the southwest can do, I hope you'll consider my talk from that perspective: what's going to happen to us if the southwest does return to severe drought?

I've been working on an article for the Center of Immigration Studies on water in the southwest, and I have a long, ponderous title, something along the lines of, "The Southwest: Drought, Reality and Population," and I subtitled it (and this is plagiarized bald facedly from a melodrama up in Santa Fe during the 2002 drought), "Water We Gonna Do?"

Now I know I'm preaching to the church choir here. You folks understand water, but to briefly recap, our aquifers are being mined, and new aquifers like the one Sandoval County has found in the Rio Puerco is fossil water, or non-replenishing, and under heavy pumping probably won't last for too many decades. The Scripps Institute thinks there are even odds that Lake Mead will run dry by 2021; this is North America's largest reservoir, possibly running dry in just over fifteen years. There are predictions that with global warming, both the Rio and the Colorado River will have 30% less water in them. The Bureau of Reclamation now admits what

environmentalists have claimed since 2002, and that is that with today's far higher population than when it was first filled in the 1960s and 1970s, Lake Powell can never be refilled. Just as an aside, just to make sure you are aware, between the year 2000 and 2003, San Juan-Chama water only on a few rare occasions ran into diversion.

I'd like to give a real quick quiz here. Who can tell me what the most populated nation in the world is?

Audience: China.

Kathleene Parker: Second most populated?

Audience: Indonesia.

Kathleene Parker: Third most populated?

Audience member: U.S. (It's on your slide!)

Kathleene Parker: Another tidbit. Just eight nations will contribute all growth on the planet to 2050. They are India, Pakistan, Nigeria, the United States, China, Bangladesh, Ethiopia, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in that order. So this kind of begs the question of how we have gone from a relative demographic non-entity to the third most populated nation in the world. The wedding cake here—if you have a young couple who is going to have a wedding, or anyone who is planning an event, one of the first questions they will answer is 'how many people can we realistically invite?' it's a fundamental question, yet we are growing as a nation, and to some extent as a planet, without asking the fundamental question of how many we can invite in.

Economist Kenneth [Balding?] has another favorite quote of mine: "Only a madman or an economist will think you can have infinite growth on a finite planet," and I'll hasten to add, "in an finite nation or a finite state." Everything in nature stops growing, except for one thing: a cancer. So when you hear, "Well, you have to have growth," if we have to have infinite growth, then we are a cancer, and we're going to destroy our host just like a cancer would.

In the 1970s and 1980s, for anyone here who's old enough to remember that (I certainly can't...that's a joke, people), population was a hot button issue, including—duh—among environmental groups. Senator Gaylord Nelson, the founder of Earth Day was adamant that U.S. and global population must be stabilized. Sierra Club president David Brower was outspoken that U.S. growth must stop, and he remained firm in this until his death a few years ago. Kennedy and Johnson era Interior Secretary Stuart Udall sounds the same theme. Carl Pope of the Sierra Club called the United States "the world's most overpopulated nation." And I don't know if you're aware of it or not, but labor activist Caesar Chavez felt so strongly about immigration that he volunteered his United Farm Workers to patrol the southern border, knowing darn well that the United States Government wasn't going to do it in the 1960s and 70s.

On the theme of concern in the 1970s over population, President Nixon appointed a Presidential Commission on Population and Growth in the American Future, also called the Rockefeller

Commission to study just how big the United States wanted to be. [The commission] was made up of members of congress, government, clergy, educators, housewives, environmental [?], you name it. They studied the issue for two years and this was their determination: “We have concluded that no substantial benefit will result from further growth of the nation’s population; rather that the gradual stabilization of our population through voluntary means would contribute significantly to the nation’s ability to solve its problems.’ The commission also urged congress to pass legislation that would impose stiff civil and criminal sanctions on the employers of illegal border-crossers and aliens.

Okay. So how did we get into the position of being a world super giant, population-wise? In 1915, the United States had a hundred million people after existing for 139 years. In 1967 we passed two hundred million after just fifty-two years had passed. In 2006, we reached three hundred million, after just thirty-nine years. So what happened? Well, as Voltaire said, “The rich will always require a plentiful supply of the poor.” Today our nation is engaged in a great debate about immigration, but history only repeats. The 1880s began what was called the Great Wave of immigration, at levels approaching one million immigrants a year. While the media is happy to hype this, the bottom line was that the robber barons in industry wanted a lot of cheap labor to run industry sweatshops and to build railroads. The results of the high immigration levels of a million a year were cities staggering under the influx of newcomers. The working conditions inspired Upton Sinclair’s *The Jungle*, and labor unrest stirred across the nation, including in our local mines in the southwest. By 1900, a rising cry of protest from the American people was forcing congress to look at the Great Wave of immigration. Teddy Roosevelt ran his campaign partly on a platform of slowing immigration. In 1918, congress slashed immigration to a mere 200,000 a year. This is an average that held until 1965, although during the depression, the numbers fell to 7,000 or so a year. From 1900 to 1970, a total of twenty million immigrants entered the nation. We are a nation of immigrants, but we are also a nation of tightly controlled immigration.

Today, a demographic or population tsunami sweeps our nation, largely unacknowledged and absent a debate as to what kind of demographic future we want for our children and grandchildren. Today we experience not a Great Wave of immigration into a still-frontier nation as happened between 1880 and 1918; today we experience a Great Tsunami of immigration into a largely urban America.

Just to recap, the Great Wave was about a million a year; post-918 to 1965 was a hundred thousand a year; and today, despite the Rockefeller Commission’s recommendation of only 500,000 a year of legal immigrants, we allow in 1.2 million a year, again, absent debates as to ramifications. On this topic, I am strictly talking numbers. But the larger issue is illegal immigration. The Census Bureau estimates it at 500,000 a year, but their numbers never jibe with what we turn up with at every census. Every census we have to add another few million people on because their projections were wrong. *Time* magazine, in a 2004 article—and it stands firm on this number—estimates illegal immigration at three million a year. In other words, three million illegal immigrants a year versus the Great Wave of a million a year during 1880 and so forth. Some estimates put it as high as five million a year. We’ll never know because these are people who have a vested interest in not being counted, and I certainly don’t blame them. The most

commonly used number by population groups is a combined total of 3.3 million immigrants, legal and illegal, each year.

Black liberal congresswoman Barbara [Joyden?] who made her name during the Watergate hearings headed the U.S. Commission on Immigration Reform in 1994. She had a summation of their work. It was: “The credibility of immigration policy can be measured by a simple yardstick. People who should get in get in; people who should not get in are kept out; and people who are judged deportable are required to leave.”

Okay, let’s look at the southwest’s numbers. I’m talking here from the perspective of my lifetime, and I think many of your lifetimes. I’ve lived in the southwest all my life and the changes in the demographic landscape are staggering, but no one acknowledges or talks about that. To give you an idea, in 1860, there were only a little more than half a million people in the entire southwest; in 1900, that had gone up to a little over four million; in 1950, just under fourteen million; 1990, forty-four million; in 2000, forty-nine million; and it’s estimated there are fifty-five million today. Now let me qualify this slightly. We just left all of California in because we didn’t know how to break out the statistics for north and south California for a very brief time. So I think we ought to be realistic and subtract about twenty million from that fifty-five million to allow for northern California. But southern California, as you know, is a big mover in water.

I’ll go through some city statistics here very quickly. In 1900, Albuquerque had 8,000 residents; in 1950 we were up to 140,000; today, the combined metro area, including Rio Rancho, is about 800,000 although I have seen numbers as high as a million. It’s predicted that by 2050 we’ll be 1.6 million, and by 2100, 3.2 million. El Paso-Juarez is already at 2.5 million. Denver, which is a southwestern city since it uses water from the Colorado—they have twenty-four water diversions from the Colorado—was 2.5 million in 2000, and is predicted to be ten million by 2080. Phoenix, which is equal today to Paris, Rome and Manhattan combined, has 3.8 million, up from a mere 5,000 at the turn of the last century. Tucson is at about a million; Salt Lake at about a million; Las Vegas, which was 2,000 sun burnt souls at a place called the Marshes in 1920, is already at 2.1 million for the metro area, with predictions of up to eight million by 2060. Bear in mind this is in a region that gets less than five inches of rain a year. San Diego is at three million today up from about 17,000 in 1900, with projections of up to about twelve million by 2140; and good old Los Angeles—today, 6% of the U.S. population lives in Los Angeles, or one in seventeen Americans. In 1900, they were 102,000 and already reaching out to the Owens Valley for water. By 1950 they were two million and already had two water diversions off the Colorado. Today they’re at about eighteen million, with every reason to believe—unless we change our immigration policies, the sole driver, well, 82% of our population growth rate this century—they’ll be at thirty-six million with an unknown long-term population.

Since I’m over-budget, I’ll skip this part. Let’s go to doubling time. I absolutely scream when the media says well we’re only growing by 1% a year. If you look here, 1% is a doubling time of every seventy years. New Mexico is up in these ranges, or a doubling time of about every twenty-eight years. The southwest is also in those ranges, with Nevada and California up in these areas. In fact, California in the 1990s was the fastest growing “nation” in the world. And they’re quite proud of it, by the way.

This is a graph by a group called Numbers USA. The green here shows what our numbers would be if we had followed the Rockefeller Commission's advice. In other words, by 2050 we'd be 259 million, basically 50 million less than we are today. The yellow line up here represents what will happen if we decide tomorrow, or today, to return immigration to low historic norms. We would top out at 340 million. If we do nothing—and really I don't think that's going to be an option with the slowing economy and the resource issues of our country—if we do nothing, by 2050, just forty years out, we'll be 460 million people.

Seventy-seven million people are added to the planet's population every year, and I submit that we as a nation, which currently accepts more immigrants than all the other nations in the world combined, have to have the discussion about how many of that seventy-seven million—which is, incidentally, more than all the people killed in all the major wars of the 20th Century—we can continue to absorb, and if we do absorb them, I think we need to work out a program where the most deserving, especially political refugees, are given top priority versus who gets across the border and yells, "King's X!" We need to ask ourselves how the addition of another ten, twenty, thirty, or thirty-five million residents to the southwest can spawn anything but ever grimmer and insurmountable water problems. I argue that the ignored elephant in the room of the demographic and population implications of immigration can no longer be ignored. We must have a population discussion on the implications of immigration, because as Utah rancher [Stuart Gaylan] said, "California and the rest of the southwest have increased the population beyond the water carrying capacity, and we are only one severe drought from disaster." Thank you.