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In Our Opinion

A time to celebrate

This weekend, residents of Joseph City will be celebrating 148 years since the town was founded. It's certainly something to be proud of. Joseph City boasts generations of families that have dedicated their lives to building their businesses, homes and families in the place they love. With Cholla Power Plant's imminent closure it can be concerning to think of the impact on the town but I have little doubt that the people in the community will overcome any obstacle and continue to prosper. It's all part of that pioneering spirit and a strong faith in God that has already weathered many a storm.

Linda Kor
Publisher/Editor

The party planned has pretty much everything happening that should be in a smalltown celebration; from community games, to delicious barbecue and a family dance. Although it's a celebration of local families and generations past, don't feel excluded if you don't fit into either category. Joseph City residents are nothing if not welcoming. So come out for the festivities. Enjoy the activities, visit with old friends and make some new. After 148 years of practice, I'm guessing it's going to be a great weekend of fun.

Rampell's View

Please, Democrats, just leave Cookie Monster alone

By Catherine Rampell

Et tu, Cookie Monster?

Sesame Street's lovable blue hedonist has somehow been roped into President Biden's anti-greed agenda, including a misguided effort to bring price controls to U.S. supermarkets.

This week, the official social media account for the character expressed frustration with shrinking product sizes. "Me hate shrinkflation! Me cookies are getting smaller," he tweeted.

The post went viral, and within hours President Biden co-opted it into his anti-corporate-greed agenda. "C is for consumers getting ripped off," the White House tweeted. "President Biden is calling on companies to put a stop to shrinkflation."

Multiple Democratic senators exploited the viral tweet, too, declaring support for legislation that would ban companies from reducing product size without commensurately cutting prices. The bill, introduced by Sen. Bob Casey (D-Pa.), is supported by Biden as well, according to a fact sheet sent to reporters.

Unsurprisingly, many noticed that Cookie Monster's shrinkflation tweet published mere days before Biden's State of the Union address. Sure makes Cookie Monster look like a Democratic, ahem, puppet. (I'll show myself out.)

Sesame Workshop maintains Cookie is his own, er, monster. "As part of our ongoing effort to connect and engage with adult fans, we posted a playful tweet from Cookie Monster about his favorite subject: cookies," the organization said in a statement to me. "The post was not intended to be political. Sesame Workshop is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization."

There are so many depressing things about this story that it's hard to know where to begin. Here goes.

First, the idea that consumer product sizes might shrink to make price increases less obvious is not new. This phenomenon comes in cycles, often when companies face cost pressures. I covered consumer gripes about "stealth downsizing" back in 2011.

Despite commentary sometimes suggesting that shrinkflation makes inflation even worse than officially reported, changes to product size are already accounted for in official inflation measures. For example, if the number of sheets per roll of toilet paper falls, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics includes the rising price per sheet when calculating the consumer price index (CPI).

In fact, BLS tracks how often products are downsized - and upsized, for that matter. In a report last year on "shrinkflation," the agency found that of the 100,000 goods and services tracked for CPI calculations, only a tiny slice were reported as downsized. Product downsizing was higher in 2015 and 2016.

The report included tallies through 2021 only, but BLS says it's seeing about the same frequency of downsizing in CPI data today as in recent years.

So why have shrinking package sizes become more salient? Though it's always annoying to get less for the same price, it's especially annoying when you're hyperaware of rising costs. Americans are understandably furious that their purchasing power has declined, whether because cookies shrank or because the price of an existing cookie size increased, or both.

But lots of irritating things happen at supermarkets, and not all of them require federal intervention. For instance: Self-checkout machines get too angry if you don't immediately put scanned items in the bagging area. People who bring 11 items into the "10 items or less lane" should be thrown out. Also, the signage should read "10 items or fewer." And why is whichever line I choose always the slowest one?

At some point, these gripes start to sound like a bad '90s stand-up routine. ("Have you seen cereal boxes

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Words of Life

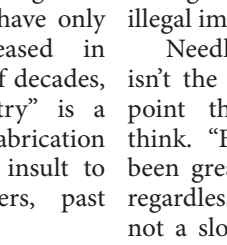
I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. - John 12:46

No, illegal immigrants didn't build America

By Rich Lowry

Joe Biden doesn't have a problem with illegal immigrants.

He's made that clear in his shame-faced retreat from his impromptu use of the term "illegal" during his State of the Union address. He regrets using the offending word, doesn't want to disrespect illegal immigrants and believes that they are absolutely essential to the success of the United States.



"Look, they built the country," Biden told Jonathan Capehart of MSNBC. He added that they are "the reason our economy is growing."

Yes, where would America be without the essential contribution made to its economic vigor by desperate people crossing the border in violation of our laws? This is all very revealing. Biden certainly sounds more like a president who has had a largely open border rather than one who, as he's been insisting lately, wants to shut down the border if only Republicans would pass the legislation he wants. Why, if Biden's correct, would we deny ourselves the benefits of illegal labor?

It's true that illegal immigrants overwhelmingly work once they get here; it's why they come in the first place, after all. But the idea that a fraction of all immigrants, whose numbers have only drastically increased in the past couple of decades, "built the country" is a ridiculous fabrication and a profound insult to American workers, past and present.

Prior to today, the highest percentage of all the foreign-born in the U.S. population was 14.8%, around the turn of the 20th century. Roughly one out of seven people obviously weren't responsible for the construction of America.

As for illegal immigrants specifically, they didn't constitute the majority of any job category in America as of 2018. Even construction workers --involved in the literal building of the country's physical plant -- were 65% native-born.

Biden is exaggerating, too, when he suggests that the economy is growing only because of illegal immigrants. But it is true that legal and illegal immigrants have made an outsized contribution to recent economic growth.

According to data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which aren't flawless but capture the big picture, the total number of employed people in the U.S. increased by 2.3 million between February 2020 and February 2024. Over those four years, the foreign-born employment level increased by 3.3 million, whereas the level of native-born employment is still down by a million.

Steve Camarota of the Center for Immigration Studies estimates that roughly half of those immigrant jobs are going to illegal immigrants.

Needless to say, this isn't the political bragging point that Biden might think. "Bidenomics -- it's been great for immigrants regardless of legal status" is not a slogan the president should want to use in a campaign against Donald Trump.

To attribute our economic growth to immigrants is to ignore the contributions of the 85% of the country that is native-born, and all its work, investment and spending.

The deeper problem is how the surge in immigrant labor coincides with a decline in labor-force participation among low-skilled Americans facing direct competition from the foreign-born. A report by Steven Camarota notes that the labor-force participation rate of native-born men without a bachelor's degree is 75.6%, still lower than the pre-pandemic level of 76.3% in the fourth quarter of 2019, and lower than in 2006 (80.5%) and 2000 (82.6%).

Constantly adding less-skilled immigrant workers to the labor force may increase overall GDP, but it doesn't make the U.S. wealthier on a per capita basis, the more important metric. According to a Congressional Budget Office analysis, greater levels of immigration will increase GDP "by an average of 0.2 percentage points a year from 2024 to 2034, leaving real GDP roughly 2% larger in 2034 than it would be otherwise." On the other hand, real GDP per person "would be 0.8% smaller."

Biden gives no indication that he sees such trade-offs. Who'd want fewer of the migrants "building our country" when we can have constantly more?

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Rich Lowry is editor of the National Review.

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Contemplating Life

"Do not make yourself low; people will tread on your head."

--Yiddish proverb

We will be put down often enough in life even if we do nothing to invite criticism from others. But, if we develop a low opinion of ourselves and let that be known, we almost guarantee that others will have a low opinion of us and act accordingly. It is sad, but the reality of this world is that there is a strong tendency for the confident to take advantage of the insecure. In the words of an old Russian proverb, "Make thyself a sheep, and the wolf is ready."

Allen W. Smith
Columnist

It is important that we remember that we are all important and special. We are not better than others, but neither are others better than us. We are all children of God, and it is just as wrong for us to put ourselves down as it is to put others down. We want to avoid becoming aggressive toward others, but we must also be careful not to let down our guard and allow others to take advantage of us.

We can dream of a world where there is only love and where everybody looks out for others as well as themselves, but we all know that the world we live in is not such a world. If it were, there would be no need for national defense and police departments. Most people are good, honest and loving. But, unfortunately, there are some who are a threat to the rest of us. No amount of wishful thinking can change this fact.

We must not allow this truth to discourage us from trying to make the world a better place, though. There is much work to be done, and we all need to join hands and accomplish as much as possible. We should treat other people the way that we would want them to treat us. Much of the time they will do likewise. The fact that some people will not reciprocate our actions does not justify the lowering of our standards for ourselves. If we live the kind of life that we would like to see everybody live, we will benefit, and so will those with whom we come into contact. We dare not be so naïve as to believe that everyone will treat us kindly, but many people will, and we will feel good about ourselves. We have little control over how other people live their lives, but we have a great deal of control over our own actions. So shouldn't we concentrate on living up to the standards that we have set for ourselves regardless of how others behave?

Think about it.

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"Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord."
-- Psalm 33:12

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