

## ESSAY

### Another Look At the Know Nothings, the American Nativist Party

Laurel Lee



Photo: The advertising industry knows people better than they know themselves. In an ad posted in 2012 on a bus shelter near my home in Chicago, a liquor distributor portrayed a female Mexican immigrant as she might think of herself or wish to be seen. She is a fierce defender of the Roman Catholic church. She's dressed like one of Pancho Villa's camp followers, many of whom were Comanche. She's busty enough to be a bobby pin-up girl suction-cupped on the inside of her (alcoholic) husband, boyfriend, brother, father and/or son's rear windshield.

I'm on the email list of the Republican National Committee. They've been sending me campaign literature for Mayra Flores, a young female Mexican immigrant who's been elected interim representative for the 34th congressional district in Texas. She also won the Republican primary for the 2022 November contest for the same seat.

The Know Nothing Party sprang immediately to my mind; and I did an internet search on it.

All articles and blogs about the Know Nothings are negative and, I think, inaccurate. My only prior knowledge comes from Carl Sandburg's comprehensive biography of Abraham Lincoln. As best I recall, Lincoln was a creature of Chicago's real estate speculators and developers. The Know Nothing party scared them because it represented the majority of Americans, approximately 75%, and would win the 1860 election. Therefore, the speculators created three parties, each of which appealed to a different segment of the Know Nothings. The speculators wanted to steal Know Nothing votes; and they succeeded.

Republicans were anti-slavery, and the speculators forced the nomination for Lincoln. Lincoln's friend, Stephen Douglas (who was another Illinoisan and a Chicagoan), got the nomination of the pro-slavery party. I don't remember if the third of the speculators' three parties was pre-existing and what its issue was.

Lincoln campaigned very little. He sent copies of his speeches in the Lincoln-Douglas debate to Quakers and other New England abolitionists. He visited the editor of a prominent Dutch Albany New York paper. He bought a German language newspaper published in Illinois, so its editors would introduce him to another voting bloc.

The speculators couldn't care less who won the 1860 presidential election, as long as it wasn't the Know Nothing candidate. Lincoln won, and he used his presidency to push through the first US mass immigration law. He marketed it to poor southern whites by saying that white European immigrants would offset their marginalization in the job market when it was flooded by emancipated blacks. I don't think the math works out, but that's what Lincoln said.

Why did real estate speculators want massive in-migration? Chicago speculators were typical of their class nation-wide. The US Congress had acquired vast amounts of land by treaty and by purchase during the years between the Revolutionary War and the Civil War. Several Congressional acts described how the land would be surveyed and sold. The alleged purpose was to make Americans independent by giving them unassailable titles to self-sufficient homesteads.

But, as Thomas Jefferson pointed out earlier:

An aristocratic party has sprung up. Against us are the executive, legislative and judicial branches, all government officers, and all who want to be officers, British merchants and their American partners, speculators and investors in banks and treasury funds that were invented to be corrupted and to assimilate us to the rotten as well as the good in the British model. (letter to Philip Mazzei, an Italian envoy to the Spanish Court in Madrid, 1796 April 24. The letter also appeared earlier and anonymously in the Congressional record.)

Congressional land was supposed to be sold at auction to the highest bidders, but Chicago and the nation's speculators bought up much of the land for less than the legislated default price. They chose land in areas where they intended to create big cities. (John Jacob Astor seems to have chosen the site Chicago grew on.) Then speculators held the land off the market. Their plan was to sell the land at a big markup and invest their windfall profits variously. Government debt was and still is considered an iron-clad investment.

Native Americans (meaning descendants of people who fought on the American side in every war from the Pequot through 1812) had no need to buy from speculators (also known as monopolists) because they could buy directly from Congress. Nor did they need to buy small urban lots when they could buy farms for the same price.

Thus, all the pro-immigration rhetoric (the poetry, the sob stories, the poster children, the romanticizing, the coining of new pejoratives like xenophobe/ia) is nothing more or less than real estate speculators trying to sell product at a big mark-up.

When they acquired their windfall profits, their rhetoric tried to and succeeded at driving up government debt and tax revenue as investment opportunities to preserve and increase their wealth. It's also quite likely that American merchants cut deals with foreign partners that brought them into the scheme, and smoothed the path into the US for immigrants of the partners' choice.

The term post-industrial reveals that US industrialization may have never been more than a temporary expedient to justify recruiting foreign labor; because foreign labor needed housing, mostly in urban areas. Industrialization was strong for as long as it took to get rotating mortgages on urban properties. Subsequent de-industrialization and white flight triggered by subsequent immigration put subsequent mortgages on urban properties and new mortgages on new suburban properties.

The current trend is to lure suburbanites into cities to drive up real estate values and tax revenue. Of course, there will eventually be another reason for people to flee cities and drive up suburban prices. And then another suckering people back into cities.

The scheme started when many Americans were tinkerers and invented complex contraptions. The immigration contraption is a perpetual motion machine, as long as diverse and offensive immigrants flow into the US.

I stumbled across the scheme because I bought a house in an historically white neighborhood in Chicago's bungalow belt 46 years ago, when I was 30 years old and reasonably well educated and intuitive. Within 10 years, Hispanic immigrants gangbanged the area where I live. They forced most of my white neighbors out of their homes, schools and jobs. Police who should have protected whites, acted out a policy that says Whites have no rights and Hispanics can do no wrong. I, for one, am offended by people who talk to me like a child and tell me to get along with immigrants who feel no obligation to get along with me. I feel like a dog being house-broken by having his nose rubbed in another dog's feces. I'm not a dog.

Divorce prevented me from moving. Then stubbornness kept me in my home. Hispanics played the race card and got away with it, even though they are notoriously racist in their homelands and here in the US. Chicago taxpayers have paid for numerous new schools because Hispanics refused to send their children to black schools, including under-populated black schools. I wanted to document what Hispanics are really like.

I spent a year at the reception desk of the counseling office of an historically white Chicago high school that had transitioned to black and was currently under siege by Hispanics, mostly Tejano and Mexican. Because Hispanics were violently territorial, the school became the first Chicago school to have a metal detector at the door. I was a substitute receptionist. The regular receptionist was a large black woman who would do well at the metal detector.

The counseling office needed a receptionist because a female Mexican activist insisted that the black male principal fill a vacancy with an Hispanic. He refused. He asked the receptionist to do the counselors' routine paperwork so they could each work with more students. He also scheduled Spanish language lessons for his black and white staff to cut off Hispanic language games at the pass. I still have my copy of the University of Chicago Spanish-English dictionary.

While the quality of life and police services deteriorated in a large swathe of Chicago, property values increased. The increases were especially unconscionable because most purchasers were/ are low-income Hispanics. Never mind that they've done their best to alienate other demographics. The valuation of my home for tax purposes leaped from the \$31,000 I paid to \$325,000, though my home was like me. It got old and it deteriorated.

Nobody did or would pay the Assessor's estimated market value. To drum up customers, I wrote a letter to the Cook County Treasurer that asked her to Show Me The Buyer. In the meantime, the websites of local schools revealed that the children of almost all Hispanics who paid inflated housing prices and rent were/ are getting free or reduced school lunches. The federal school lunch program isn't the only entitlement that funds real estate inflation.

Additional research at Chicago Public Schools and US News & World Reports websites revealed that a typical 1st, 2nd and 3rd generation Hispanic immigrant child is a slow learner. For the majority of CPS schools, average school-wide scores on standardized tests of math and reading skills are at the 0 to 20th percentile. The percentiles were probably calculated after the scores of 20% of the children were deleted from the database. The scores of special education children (diverse learners) aren't counted; and 20% of CPS students have been identified as SPED.

In most US municipalities, preK-12 schools are getting more than half the revenue from increasingly inflated property tax bills; and the schools' percentage is also increasing. The very existence of the schools and their support by property taxation are problematic because of fundamental US laws like the Land Ordinance for the Northwest Territory enacted 1785 May 20. The schools exist more because they're lucrative investment opportunities for wealthy entities than concern about a literate population. At the current moment in US history, most parents should be educated sufficiently to teach their children themselves, and many do teach their own because of mandatory homework protocols. To look squarely and honestly at American schools is to see that immigrants, especially Hispanic immigrants, are the only thing that keeps them open. Immigrants are the excuse for the high cost of schools that many homeowners can't afford. In Cook County for tax year 2019, approximately 35,000 property owners became tax-delinquent. The education of children, especially immigrant children, shouldn't be an excuse to dispossess Americans of their property.

I made and distributed a spreadsheet of real estate inflation on my block and coped with relentless retaliation for a decade. Police, teachers, sanitation workers, electricians, private contractors, aldermen, librarians, and many other municipal employees are paid from property tax revenue. Their jobs and paychecks depend on inflation to offset revenue lost to post-industrialism and white flight. The city even tried to make up for the loss of private sector jobs by creating additional municipal jobs.

The spreadsheet documents further that the notoriously corrupt alderman and Cook County Assessor that my neighbors voted into office rewarded their voters several ways. One way is to grossly undervalue their properties (comparatively) to reduce their tax burden, though they make liberal use of city services.

So, how does inflation occur when all the numbers say it shouldn't? (1) As always, import ignorant people who don't know the pricing history of the homes they buy. (2) In the case of Hispanics, encourage them to feel like conquistadores nuevos finally winning the wars of 1848 and 1898 and avenging Pancho Villa's defeat. (3) Space out sales, because it takes only a few actual selling prices per reassessment period to inflate the taxable values of all other homes. (4) While tax revenue is on deposit, loan it to mortgage bankers to finance the needed inflated actual selling prices.

Getting back to Mayra of TX34, I took umbrage at the tone of the campaign literature that somebody else wrote in her name. I realized that the tone would alienate many more people. I wondered if, 162 years after Abraham Lincoln conquered the White House, the monopolists' Republican Party regulars realize that they're experiencing karma. In a desperate attempt to win an election, they must accept ignorant foreign-born girls into their midst that they shouldn't have accepted into the country in the first place.

Generally, in the modern world at least, people who have the characteristics to be good American citizens stay in their homelands and fight the good fight there. Mayra and her parents are no exception to the rule.