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# THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT LOBBY:

The White Nationalist Roots of the Organizations Fighting Immigration Reform



**T**he issue of immigration is front and center in the 2016 presidential election. Republican Donald Trump launched his campaign by bashing Mexican immigrants, calling them “rapists,” “killers” and drug dealers, and he later argued that the U.S. should not only reject all refugees from the conflict in Syria but temporarily bar all of the world’s 1.6 billion Muslims from entering the U.S. at all. Other candidates have scrambled to keep up with his extremism.

Americans as a whole have favorable views on immigration: A June 2015 Gallup poll found that 65 percent of Americans supported keeping immigration at its current level or allowing an increase, and a 2015 Pew survey found that 72 percent of Americans support finding a way for undocumented immigrants to legally stay in the country. In 2014, Pew found that only 17 percent of Americans supported a government effort to round up and deport all of the undocumented immigrants living in the U.S., the plan backed by Trump. Pew found that 57 percent opposed repealing the Constitution’s protection of birthright citizenship, a favorite target of the anti-immigration movement and many Republican politicians.

Despite these widespread positive views on immigration and immigrants, anti-immigrant sentiment has become so pervasive in the Republican Party that bipartisan immigration reform has been stalled for years, and even former supporters like Rubio have backed down under political pressure.

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This disconnect is in large part thanks to the lobbying, messaging and grassroots activism efforts of a small group of interconnected

organizations all stemming from one activist, John Tanton, the architect of the anti-immigration movement as we know it today. Although Tanton, a retired ophthalmologist, has retreated from much of his activism, the network that he founded continues to exert outsized pressure on politicians and policymakers.

Although these Tanton-connected groups say they reject anti-immigrant rhetoric, they all have ties

to the dark underbelly of the anti-immigrant movement, which smears immigrants using racial terms, plays to fears of demographic change, and caters to those who want the U.S. to be and remain a nation run by and for a white majority. Tanton has explicitly described his work using these racial terms, while some of his followers have used subtler dog-whistles to get the point across. One of these groups, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) is listed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) because of its history of smearing immigrants and its ties to explicitly white nationalist activists and groups.


Tanton and leaders of his affiliated groups have sometimes also taken disturbing positions on “population control,” including supporting China’s one-child policy, which resulted in decades of forced abortions and sterilizations in that country.

The three major anti-immigration groups, all of which stem from Tanton, are FAIR, which the Center for New Community describes as the “rhetorical compass” of the movement; NumbersUSA, the movement’s grassroots activism wing, which says it has “more than three million participants in all 435 congressional districts”; and the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), the movement’s research arm, whose claims are frequently echoed on talk radio, on the campaign trail and on Capitol Hill.



Sen. Ted Cruz (Wikimedia/Gage Skidmore)





The organizations saturate media coverage of immigration issues, both fueling negative conservative media coverage and providing spokespeople to offer more toned-down quotes to the mainstream media. Looking back at the defeat of President George W. Bush's 2007 effort at immigration reform, Bush's commerce secretary Carlos Gutierrez said the effort's main adversaries were "on the one hand talk radio, on the other it was these groups: FAIR and NumbersUSA, Center for Immigration Studies." When the Senate's "Gang of Eight" forged a bipartisan immigration reform bill six years later, the same groups waged a campaign to stop it.

The groups maintain close ties to anti-immigration politicians, including members of the congressional Immigration Reform Caucus, which supports more restrictive immigration policies.

CIS officials have been called to testify before congressional committees at least 26 times since Republicans gained control of the House in 2011, weighing in on issues including the DREAM

Act, Syrian refugees and unaccompanied minors from Central America, according to a review of committee records. FAIR has claimed that it "has been called to testify on immigration bills before Congress more than any organization in America."

In 2007, after a bipartisan immigration reform plan fell apart, Sen. Jeff Sessions of Alabama, a leading anti-immigration voice in the Senate, who is now the chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee's subcommittee on immigration, spoke to a meeting of FAIR's board of advisors and thanked them for helping to stir up opposition to the bill. In 2013, as Congress was considering another bipartisan immigration compromise, Sessions and three Republican House members joined a CIS teleconference to argue against it. Sessions, Sen. Ted Cruz of Texas and Rep. Steve King of Iowa, the most outspoken anti-immigration member of the House, spoke at a rally organized by a front group of FAIR, and King joined NumbersUSA President Roy Beck on the road.

## HATE MEDIA

One of John Tanton's most revealing creations is the Social Contract Press, an organization that SPLC lists as a hate group because it "routinely publishes race-baiting articles penned by white nationalists." The press, which Tanton founded in 1990, is run out of Tanton's foundation, U.S. Inc.

The Social Contract Press publishes a journal, "The Social Contract," which Tanton edited for the first eight years of its existence. While Tanton continues to serve as the journal's publisher, it is now edited by Wayne Lutton, who, according to SPLC, "has held leadership positions in four other white national hate groups," including the Council of Conservative Citizens, and has said that white Americans "are the real Americans, not the Hmong, not Latinos, not the Siberian-Americans."

"The Social Contract" has published a wide range of racist views, including an issue dedicated to attacking "multiculturalism" for replacing "successful Euro-American culture" and another issue dedicated entirely to reprinting articles from the white nationalist site VDARE. (Officials at CIS and at FAIR have also written for VDARE, which is named after Virginia Dare, thought to be the first child of English colonists born in America; one VDARE contributor, Jared Taylor, lent his voice to a robo-call urging Iowans to caucus for Trump because "we need smart, well-educated white people who assimilate to our culture" instead of Muslim immigrants.) FAIR spokesman Ira Mehlman has written several articles for "The Social Contract."

Despite the Social Contract Press' white nationalist ties, it continues to attract prominent members of the anti-immigrant movement, including members of the Tanton network, to its annual Writers Workshop. People who have spoken at the workshops include CIS Executive Director Mark Krikorian and policy staffer Jessica Vaughan and longtime FAIR attorney and Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach. The year Vaughan spoke to the workshop, one of her fellow speakers was Peter Brimelow, founder and editor of the white nationalist website VDARE. Rep. Brian Babin, the Texas Republican who has become a leading voice in Congress against refugee resettlement, spoke at the 2015 Social Contract Writers Workshop.





U.S. Congressman Steve King speaking with supporters of U.S. Senator Ted Cruz at a meet and greet at the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines, Iowa. (Flickr/Gage Skidmore)

King and Sessions have played a critical role in funneling the ideology of the Tanton groups to activists, policymakers and candidates. King, now a prominent endorser of Cruz's presidential campaign, is infamous for having asserted that young undocumented immigrants who would be eligible for the DREAM Act have "calves the size of cantaloupes because they've been hauling 75 pounds of marijuana across the desert." He led House efforts to roll back President Obama's attempt to protect some DREAMers from deportation. Sessions helped Trump craft his immigration plan, which would, among other things, attempt to drive away undocumented immigrants through policies targeting their children. In January 2016, a top aide to Sessions left to join Trump's campaign.

The role that these groups play in connecting activists, politicians and talk radio personalities in order to create an echo chamber may be best illustrated by FAIR's annual "Hold Their Feet to the Fire" event, which brings conservative talk radio hosts from around the country to a "radio row," where they interview anti-immigration activists and Republican politicians.

One of the most influential ideas that these groups have helped to develop and promote is "attrition through enforcement," also known as "self-deportation," the principle behind policies that are meant to make life so miserable for undocumented immigrants that they flee on their own. The strategy was first laid out in 2005 by CIS Executive Director Mark Krikorian, who explained that it would "combine an increase in conventional enforcement — arrests, prosecutions, deportations, asset seizures, etc. — with expanded use of verification of legal status at a variety of important points, to make it as difficult and unpleasant as possible to live here illegally." As the immigrants' rights group America's Voice has explained, "attrition through enforcement" is an attempt to avoid the logistical difficulties and public outcry that would be provoked by mass deportations, while achieving the same end goal.

CIS, Numbers USA and FAIR all promoted the "attrition through enforcement" doctrine to the point that it became part of the platform of Mitt Romney, the Republican presidential nominee in 2012, and has been embraced by current Republican presidential frontrunners Trump and Cruz. (Trump has backed undisguised mass deportation as well.)

"Attrition through enforcement" is far from the magical solution to unauthorized immigration that its proponents hope it will be. Alabama passed the most restrictive "self-deportation" law in the country in 2011, which its sponsor said "attacks every aspect of an illegal alien's life" by requiring that schools, employers, public services and essentially anybody else check people's immigration status before doing business with them. On the day the law took effect, thousands of children didn't show up for school. Churches worried that they would be

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forced to turn soup kitchens into immigration enforcement operations. Some police officers said that undocumented immigrants stopped reporting crimes out of fear that they would be the ones arrested. Farms were left in the lurch during a harvest as employees didn't show up to work. One study estimated that the law, which had been sold as a way to reduce unemployment among citizens, would shrink the economy by billions of dollars and ultimately cost the state tens of thousands of jobs.

To understand the movement that is stalling any meaningful attempt at immigration

reform while promoting false alternatives like "attrition through enforcement," it is important to understand the Tanton network and how it operates. This report provides a brief introduction to the network and its players and how they are shaping the debate about immigration in the U.S. Further resources on the Tanton network can be found at the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Center for New Community. Up-to-date monitoring of the major anti-immigrant groups can be found at People For the American Way's Right Wing Watch blog.

## History

**J**ohn Tanton, who was described by the American Prospect as the "architect" of the network at the center of today's anti-immigration movement, has helped create a host of interconnected organizations, the most influential of which have been FAIR, NumbersUSA and CIS.

Tanton, now retired and living in Michigan, came to the anti-immigration cause through the "population control" movement that was, in the 1960s and 1970s, one of the strands of activism behind environmentalism and efforts to expand birth control and abortion rights, but has since been largely rejected by both movements. In the late 1960s, Tanton was briefly the president of his local chapter of Planned Parenthood, but quit, according to the Prospect, "when a woman's right to control her own body — rather than population control — became the dominant talking point about abortion." (Even at the time, many feminists objected to "population control" arguments in favor of reproductive rights.) Tanton was also influenced by a "population control" vision of environmentalism: He served for a time as the head of Zero Population Growth, and has over the years tried unsuccessfully to win environmentalist groups over to his harsh view on immigration.

Tanton's commitment to "population control" extends to supporting China's brutal one-child policy. Tanton himself told an interviewer in 2006 that through the policy China had "brought the population under control," adding that "unfortunately for us, India has not gone through



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the same demographic transition."

Tanton eventually found his calling in the effort to restrict immigration. Between 1979 and 1999, Tanton founded, provided funding for, or was otherwise involved in the creation or growth of 13 anti-immigration groups, according to a list created by the SPLC. The first of these was FAIR, which he founded in 1979. In 1985, he founded the CIS, followed by NumbersUSA in 1996. These groups, in turn, have spawned other organizations, and Tanton has been involved in the creation of still others.

Tanton has made it clear that one of the major factors driving his anti-immigration activism is his interest in the United States remaining a majority-white nation. He wrote in a 1993 letter: "I have come to the point of view that for European-American society and culture to persist, it requires an European-American majority and a clear one at that. I doubt very much that our traditions will be carried on by

Tanton fretted specifically about Latino immigration — or what he called a “Latin onslaught” — seeing it as a threat to America’s white majority.

other peoples.” He warned in 1997 that America could be overrun by immigrants “defecating and creating garbage and looking for jobs.” In 1993, he wrote a memo outlining an idea he had come up with along with three well-known white nationalists to start a group called “League for European American Defense, Education, and Research” — a group dedicated to preventing the end of a white majority in America.

In leaked memos from a 1986 strategy session, Tanton fretted specifically about Latino immigration — or what he called a “Latin onslaught” — seeing it as a threat to America’s white majority. He wrote that white Americans would have to “compete” with Latino immigrants and choose between having children and letting

“someone else with greater reproductive powers occupy the space.”

“As whites see their power and control over their lives declining,” he asked, “will they simply go quietly into the night? Or will there be an explosion?”

In a 1996 letter, Tanton fretted about “less intelligent” people having children: “Do we leave it to individuals to decide that they are the intelligent ones who should have more kids? And more troublesome, what about the less intelligent, who logically should have less? Who is going to break the bad news [to less intelligent individuals], and how will it be implemented?” At one point, Tanton founded his own pro-eugenics organization, the Society for Genetic Education. He also authored a paper titled “The Case for Passive Eugenics.”

When the SPLC read through Tanton’s papers in 2008, the group found “a lengthy record of friendly correspondence with Holocaust deniers, a former Klan lawyer and leading white nationalist thinkers.”

One of these correspondents was Harry Weyher, a fellow eugenics proponent who for decades led a “race betterment” group, the Pioneer Fund, which became a financier of FAIR.



Protest against child migrants in Wisconsin, July 2014 (Flickr/Joe Brusky)



## The Policymakers: Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR)

**F**AIR, which Tanton founded in 1979, and whose advisory board he remains a member of, in many ways shapes the anti-immigration movement's policy priorities. The group is currently calling for a moratorium on all immigration, except in narrow instances, with the ultimate goal of setting legal immigration at "the lowest feasible levels," which it places at less than one-third of the current immigration level. Along with wanting to drastically limit legal immigration, FAIR takes a hard-line position against undocumented immigrants, promoting the "self-deportation" policies — that is, making life so difficult for undocumented immigrants that they are forced to flee — that were championed by Mitt Romney in his 2012 presidential run. FAIR opposes any plan to give undocumented immigrants a path to citizenship or legal status.

FAIR's legal arm, the Immigration Reform Law Institute (IRLI), has helped craft anti-immigrant legislation around the country, including Arizona's infamous "self-deportation" measure SB 1070 and efforts to end the 14th Amendment's guarantee of birthright citizenship. In 2010, Think Progress wrote that "IRLI has been behind most, if not every, local legislative

immigration crackdown over the past few years." Much of this work was driven by IRLI lawyer Kris Kobach, who joined the group in 2003. Kobach is now secretary of state of Kansas, but remains "of counsel" to IRLI. He served as an advisor to Mitt Romney during his 2012 presidential campaign, when Romney espoused the doctrine of "self-deportation."

FAIR's current president is Dan Stein, who has worked for the organization since 1982. Stein has framed the immigration debate in racial terms, calling the 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act, which eliminated a quota system that favored Northern Europeans and shut out Asians and

Africans, an attempt to "retaliate against Anglo-Saxon dominance" in the country. He has warned that President Obama's immigration policies will cause the U.S. to "fall apart" like Iraq and once speculated that the U.S. has seen so few terrorist attacks under President Obama because terrorists see him as an "ally" and "don't want to embarrass" him.



### WHERE THE MONEY COMES FROM

FAIR, CIS and NumbersUSA are heavily funded by foundations connected to a single wealthy conservative family, the Scaifes. Tanton was a friend of the late Cordelia Scaife May, whose Colcom Foundation — which says it wants to roll back America's "ever-increasing population" — continues to fund much of the Tanton network. The Center for Media and Democracy (CMD) wrote in 2013, "Like Tanton, May was an environmentalist committed to population control — and believed limiting immigration was the best way to do it — and founded the Colcom Foundation to advance this goal, providing tens of millions to anti-immigrant groups as well as funding legitimate environmental organizations."

In the 2013 tax year, the most recent for which tax records are available, Colcom provided FAIR with a little over \$4 million of the \$6.3 million grants and contributions it received that year; about \$1.9 million of the \$2.4 million that CIS took in; and nearly \$4 million of the \$6.3 million received by NumbersUSA's educational arm.

Foundations run by Scaife May's brother, the conservative mega-donor Richard Mellon Scaife, have also kicked in millions of dollars to Tanton network organizations.

FAIR attracted controversy when it was reported that between 1985 and 1994, Tanton had sought and received \$1.2 million for the group from the Pioneer Fund, a eugenicist group with the goal of "race betterment."

While Stein has hinted at immigration restriction as a tool of white nationalism, FAIR has openly associated with people who explicitly advocate for the U.S. to remain a white-dominated nation.

A short-lived television program produced by FAIR in 1996 featured interviews with well-known white nationalists Sam Francis, Jared Taylor and Peter Brimelow, and a common area of discussion was that the immigrant “invasion” would destroy America. Stein, interviewing one guest, wondered, “How can we preserve America if it becomes 50 percent Latin American?” In a 1991 interview for an article on the higher birth rates among Asian and Latino immigrants than among native-born Americans, Stein said, “It’s almost like they’re getting into competitive breeding. You have to take into account the various fertility rates in designing limits on immigration.” Six years later, he told the Wall Street Journal, “Certainly we would encourage people in other countries to have small families. Otherwise they’ll all be coming here, because there’s no room at the Vatican.”

Over a period of 10 years in the 1980s and 1990s, FAIR took in more than \$1 million from the Pioneer Fund, which SPLC describes as “a eugenicist organization that was started in 1937 by men close to the Nazi regime who wanted to pursue ‘race betterment’ by promoting the genetic lines of American whites,” and for several years afterward continued to receive support from individual leaders of the fund.

Over the years, FAIR’s board of directors and board of advisors have included people who are hardly circumspect about the goals of their activism. The current co-chairman of FAIR’s board of advisors, Donald Collins, Sr., writes frequently for the racist website VDARE, often



## FAIR spokespeople have expressed troubling views in favor of government control of reproduction.

playing up the fact that he identifies as “a proud liberal Democrat” (albeit one who is a big fan of Donald Trump). On VDARE, Collins has written that the country could face another civil war if “the Left’s plan ... to turn our country into just another part of the Third World comes true.”

Collins’ board co-chair is former Republican Rep. Brian Bilbray of California, who during his time in office was the chairman of the restrictionist Immigration Reform Caucus and who has called the 14th Amendment’s birthright citizenship protection an “urban legend.” Another member of FAIR’s advisory board is Republican Rep. Lou Barletta, who is infamous for his cruel and unsuccessful anti-immigrant policies as the mayor of Hazleton, Pennsylvania (which were developed with the help of FAIR’s Kobach).

Also on FAIR’s board of advisers is Don Feder, who also serves as a spokesman for the global social conservative group World Congress of Families. Feder has written that the U.S. is being “infiltrated by parasites, criminals, potential terrorists and the arrogantly unassimilable [sic]” and said that President Obama “occupies the White House ... the way Germany occupied France during World War II.” In 2005, Feder wrote:

When illegals are caught (before they’re deported), they should spend several years turning big rocks into little rocks, in prisons that make Edmond Dantes’ Chateau D’If look like the Ritz Carlton.

Troops should be stationed on our southern border with shoot-to-kill orders for anyone trying to enter the United States without a visa or proof of citizenship in hand.

Interestingly, while Tanton embraced “population control” as a way of engineering a country that looks like he would want it to, Feder takes the opposite approach to a similar goal, urging women in the “Western world” to forgo birth control in order to counter falling birth rates that he says are leading to the “suicide of the West.”



Other FAIR spokespeople have also expressed troubling views in favor of government control of reproduction. One now-deceased FAIR board member, Garrett Hardin, praised China's one-child policy, saying that it did not go far enough, and lamented that the developing world is populated with "the next generation of breeders." Hardin said in response to a famine in Ethiopia that "[s]ending food to Ethiopia does more harm than good" because it would "only encourage population growth."

According to Hardin, however, the U.S. had to turn to other options to stop its own population growth. "Because widespread disease and famine no longer exist, we have to find another means to stop population increases," he said in 1992. "The quickest, easiest and most effective form of population control in the U.S., that I support wholeheartedly, is to end immigration."

Asked about Hardin's views by the Wall Street Journal in 1997, Stein attempted to whitewash China's one-child policy, calling it an "international family planning program." Of Hardin's view that the government should "encourage the breeding of more intelligent people rather than the less intelligent," he asked, "Yeah, so what? What is your problem with that? Should we be subsidizing people with low IQs

to have as many children as possible, and not subsidizing those with high ones?"

Kobach, the lawyer with FAIR's legal arm who is now secretary of state of Kansas, has made his own nods to the fear of a diminishing white majority in the U.S., warning that Democrats are "replacing American voters with newly legalized aliens" and telling a caller to his radio program who worried that a Hispanic majority would conduct "ethnic cleansing" of whites that while such an event was unlikely, under President Obama, "I wonder what could happen."

FAIR has also tried out purely political arguments to get Republicans on its side on immigration with the goal, as Tanton put it in 2001, "to change Republicans' perception of immigration so that when they encounter the word 'immigrant,' their reaction is 'Democrat.'"

To achieve this aim, FAIR has sometimes painted immigrants as not just inherently liberal but inherently un-American. As Stein said in the 1997 Wall Street Journal interview, "Immigrants don't come all church-loving, freedom-loving, God-fearing. ... Many of them hate America; hate everything that the United States stands for. Talk to some of these Central Americans."







March for immigration reform, 2010 (Flickr/Justin Valas)

## The Think Tank: Center for Immigration Studies (CIS)

In 1985, a few years after he launched FAIR, Tanton created the Center for Immigration Studies as a think tank to “wage a war of ideas” to further spread his view of immigration. Today, CIS spokespeople are frequently quoted in the media, and its studies supply the anti-immigrant movement and its allied politicians with a stream of talking points and figures to back up its positions.

One recent CIS “fact” that quickly became a matter of orthodoxy in the anti-immigrant movement was its insistence in 2014 that “all employment growth since 2000 went to immigrants.” This assertion was repeated over and over again in the right-wing media, including on Rush Limbaugh’s radio program. Sen. Jeff Sessions, a leading anti-immigration voice in Congress, cited this “fact” in an “immigration handbook” for incoming Republican members

of Congress. Former Sen. Rick Santorum incorporated it into his talking points for his 2016 presidential campaign.



(Flickr/Gage Skidmore)



But CIS' study was highly flawed, as many outside observers explained. Alex Nowrasteh of the libertarian Cato Institute meticulously recreated the center's data and discovered that the only reasonable conclusion he could come to "is that immigrants hold about a percentage of jobs in the economy that is roughly equal to their percent of the population."

Another CIS "fact" that quickly became part of the right-wing bloodstream was that in 2013, the Obama administration "freed 36,007 convicted criminal aliens ... who were awaiting the outcome of deportation proceedings." CIS neglected to mention that many of these releases were required by law and that many of those released were people who had committed less serious crimes. But without context, the number served to feed a favorite narrative within the anti-immigrant movement — the narrative of immigrants as violent criminals. Despite the CIS report's flaws, it was quickly picked up by anti-immigration members of Congress and by leading GOP presidential candidates Donald Trump and Ted Cruz, who cited it as evidence that the Obama administration was supposedly failing to enforce immigration laws.

A number of other CIS studies purporting to support the group's policy goals have been exposed as flawed or have been debunked. One flawed study tried unconvincingly to prove that the U.S. is at risk of having parents come to the U.S. to have children with the specific intent of raising them (in foreign countries) to become Islamic extremists who would then return to the U.S. as citizens to commit terrorist attacks, also known as Rep. Louie Gohmert's "terror baby" theory.



In her vitriolic anti-immigrant book "Adios, America," published in 2015, pundit Ann Coulter cited CIS and its staffers at least 18 times.

CIS has also backed FAIR's "self-deportation" idea, which CIS Executive Director Mark Krikorian very straightforwardly explained is an attempt to "make it as difficult as possible for illegal aliens to live a normal life here," forcing them to flee the country.

One of CIS' most powerful messages, however, has been a political one aimed at Republicans considering embracing immigration reform. After Mitt Romney's defeat in the 2012 election, thanks in part to eroding support among Latino voters, an "autopsy report" commissioned by the

## ENGLISH ONLY

Along with his anti-immigration work, Tanton has established a pair of organizations working to make English the official language of the U.S. with the goal of preventing bilingualism in schools and government services. Tanton founded U.S. English in 1983 and ProEnglish in 1994.

ProEnglish is currently run by Robert Vandervoort, previously the leader of a Chicago spinoff of the white nationalist group American Renaissance. Despite this background, ProEnglish has been repeatedly welcomed at the American Conservative Union's annual Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC).



Republican National Committee urged the party to “embrace and champion immigration reform” in order to win back Latino voters. In 2013, a bipartisan group of senators won the Senate passage of an immigration reform package that included a path to citizenship for some of the country’s undocumented immigrants. Quickly, it became clear that the Republican majority in the House would not even take up a vote on the bill. Within months, Sen. Marco Rubio, one of the bipartisan “Gang of Eight” who drafted the bill, had backed away from it.

The bill was defeated thanks to a campaign by some of the most strident anti-immigration members of Congress, with the support of anti-immigrant groups.

Along with policy arguments against immigration reform, anti-immigrant groups had a political argument: that instead of embracing a moderate position on immigration in order to win back Latinos who favored George W. Bush, the GOP should put its energy and resources into expanding its popularity and increasing turnout among white voters, in part by scapegoating



Protest organized by FAIR-affiliated Black American Leadership Alliance, 2013 (PFAW)

**Krikorian argued that immigration reform would “destroy the Republican Party” and ultimately “the republic.”**

people of color. For anti-immigrant groups, this strategy had the added bonus of turning Republicans away from attempts at meaningful reform.

The first person to clearly lay out the case that the GOP should stop trying to win over people of color and focus solely on white voters was the extremist writer Steve Sailer, writing for the white nationalist website VDARE in 2000. What became known as the “Sailer Strategy” had a resurgence in popularity as the anti-immigrant movement tried to sink the “Gang of Eight” bill — even if its proponents didn’t cite Sailer by name. Pat Buchanan, who has touted Sailer’s work, bluntly called for a new “Southern Strategy” to stir up white voters’ fears of Latinos, while Eagle Forum’s Phyllis Schlafly declared that “the people the Republicans should reach out to are the ... white voters” because there was “no evidence at all that these Hispanics coming in from Mexico will vote Republican.” As the Senate debated the “Gang of Eight” proposal, CIS echoed these sentiments in a press release, saying that by supporting the bill, Republicans would “alienate” the “less-educated whites” who they should really be turning out to win elections.

CIS spokespeople regularly make this argument, along with another one that has long been popular among white nationalists: that Latino immigrants will never vote Republican because they are inherently liberal. During the debate over the “Gang of Eight” bill, CIS Executive Director Mark Krikorian argued that the GOP shouldn’t bother trying to increase its share of the Latino vote because “generally speaking, Hispanic voters are Democrats, and so the idea of importing more of them as a solution to the Republican Party’s problems is kind of silly.” In another interview, Krikorian argued that immigration reform would “destroy the Republican Party” and ultimately “the republic.” The next year, he charged that Democrats were



using immigration as “a way of importing voters” and to “create the conditions, such as increased poverty, increased lack of health insurance, that lead even non-immigrant voters to be more receptive to big government solutions.” At one point, Krikorian told Republicans that they should oppose immigration reform simply to deny President Obama a political victory.

Steven Camarota, the research director at CIS, has said that the current level of legal immigration “dooms” conservatives. Stephen Steinlight, a senior policy analyst at CIS, has said that immigration reform would lead to “the unmaking of America” by “destroying the Republican Party” and turning the U.S. into a “tyrannical and corrupt” one-party state. He explained that Latinos aren’t likely to vote Republican because they “don’t exemplify ‘strong family values,’” as illustrated by high rates of “illegitimacy.” More than a year before Donald Trump made national headlines by calling for a ban on all Muslim immigration, Steinlight said that he would like to ban Muslims from coming to the country because they “believe in things that are subversive to the Constitution.”

Steinlight summed up the argument in 2005, when he said that immigration threatens “the American people as a whole and the future of Western civilization.” More recently, Steinlight told a tea party group in 2014 that the “Gang of Eight” immigration reform bill amounted to “a plot against America” because it would turn the U.S. into a Democrat-led “one-party state” where citizens would “lose our liberty” and “social cohesion.” Steinlight has happily fed into some of the more vitriolic tea party hatred of President Obama, saying that the president should not only be impeached for his handling of immigration, but that “being hung, drawn and quartered is probably too good for him.” On another occasion, Steinlight said that he’d like to attack religious leaders who support immigration reform with “a baseball bat.”

CIS maintains close ties to FAIR. When he launched CIS, which was at its start a project of FAIR, Tanton put his friend and FAIR board member Otis Graham in charge. In 1995, CIS’ current director, former FAIR employee Mark Krikorian, took over, while Graham continued to sit on its board of directors. Today, three of the 10 members of CIS’s board of directors also sit on FAIR’s board of directors or board of advisors.



## RECRUITING ENVIRONMENTALISTS

The Tanton network has tried several times, to no avail, to get the environmentalist movement on its side in the immigration debate. In 1986, Tanton wrote in a memo, “The Sierra Club may not want to touch the immigration issue, but the immigration issue is going to touch the Sierra Club!” Activists aligned with FAIR attempted in the 1990s to convince the environmentalist group to add an anti-immigration plank to its platform, with no success. In 2004, anti-immigrant activists ran a slate of candidates, some connected with FAIR, for the Sierra Club’s board of directors in the hopes of winning a majority for its position. The effort failed.

A few years later, a group called Progressives for Immigration Reform (PFIR) emerged, purporting to be a group of progressives concerned about immigration’s impact on the environment. Unsurprisingly, PFIR turned out to be yet another project of the Tanton network, funded by the Colcom Foundation, aided by NumbersUSA’s Roy Beck, with a board made up in part by the activists who had failed to get elected by members of the Sierra Club. Its executive director was Leah Durant, who had previously worked for FAIR’s legal affiliate.

Another group attempting to get environmentalists on board with the anti-immigrant agenda is Californians for Population Stabilization (CAPS), which has received funding from Tanton and from the eugenicist Pioneer Fund. CAPS was co-founded by Garrett Hardin, a FAIR board member who had expressed interest in eugenics, and continues to share some leadership with FAIR. CAPS’ national media director, Joe Guzzardi, is a former writer for the white nationalist site VDARE. One of its board members, Marilyn DeYoung, called the DREAM Act “dangerous” because beneficiaries “know how to game our benefits” and could end up being communists or criminals.

## The Political Pressure Machine: NumbersUSA

The first Republican presidential debate of the 2016 campaign cycle smashed TV ratings records, thanks in large part to the front-and-center placement of Donald Trump, who had achieved unexpected popularity in a campaign based on racist broadsides against immigrants.

But during a commercial break, many viewers were treated to a seemingly different view of the immigration debate: an ad featuring a diverse group of Americans saying that current levels of legal immigration are too high, not because of racial or ethnic concerns, but because of “the numbers.”



The ad directed viewers to the website of the group NumbersUSA, which states prominently that it says “no’ to immigrant bashing” and that “neither race nor ethnicity should be factors in setting or debating immigration policies.”

What won’t be found on NumbersUSA’s website is any reference to its white nationalist ties or its origins as part of John Tanton’s anti-immigration network.

Roy Beck, the executive director of NumbersUSA, founded the grassroots activism group in 1996 under the umbrella of Tanton’s foundation, U.S.

Inc. At the foundation, he also served as an editor of Tanton’s “The Social Contract” magazine, which later became infamous for publishing the work of white nationalist writers, and helped edit a book by Tanton and Wayne Lutton, a white supremacist who would later become the editor of “The Social Contract.” In 1996, Beck spoke to a meeting of the white supremacist Council of Conservative Citizens, although he later claimed to be ignorant of the group’s views. Tanton eventually named Beck the “heir apparent” of his foundation. In 2002, Beck split his group from Tanton’s and began the process of attempting to separate himself from his former employer’s controversial views.

Although Beck has attempted to distance himself from some of these more unsavory associations, NumbersUSA’s restrictionist goals remain in line with the goals promoted by Tanton. NumbersUSA wants to eliminate birthright citizenship and drastically reduce legal immigration by seeking “elimination of most or all” permanent immigration categories except immediate family members, a limited number of refugees and those with “truly extraordinary skills in the national interest.”

Although NumbersUSA takes a softer tone than many in the anti-immigrant movement, that belies its hard-line policy stances. In the summer of 2015, as Trump rose in the polls on a wave of anti-immigrant hate, Beck lowered Trump’s grade on his group’s scorecard because the candidate had “seemed to be defensive and trying to prove that he isn’t hostile to immigrants by also indicating

## DEFLECTING CHARGES OF RACISM

Along with trying to win over liberal environmentalists, people affiliated with the Tanton network have attempted to deflect charges of racism by creating groups specifically geared toward African Americans and Latinos.

In 2006, FAIR created a group called Choose Black America, staffed by veteran anti-immigrant activists, which seemed to do little but exist as a public relations cover for other anti-immigrant groups. Seven years later, many of the same activists reappeared in a group called the Black American Leadership Alliance, which emerged out of Progressives for Immigration Reform, seemingly only to oppose the “Gang of Eight” immigration bill. Another FAIR front group, You Don’t Speak for Me, claimed to represent anti-immigration Latinos.





he would like to see legal immigration increased.” The group’s activism and carefully placed attacks on members of Congress helped to sink President George W. Bush’s attempt at immigration reform and the 2013 “Gang of Eight” plan.

Beck couches these hard-line policies in careful language. NumbersUSA’s website cites its major concerns as the environment and unemployment, both of which it says are negatively impacted by the current levels of legal and illegal immigration. It links immigration to “traffic gridlock” and claims that immigrants and “American-born refugees” fleeing immigrant-packed cities are eroding the “way of life” in small towns. The group warns, with little explanation, that population growth through immigration will also erode “individual liberties.” It also makes a specific appeal to African Americans, part of the anti-immigrant movement’s long-term attempt to drive a wedge between African Americans and Latinos.

It’s no coincidence that Ann Coulter cited NumbersUSA in one of the most racist passages of her 2015 book “Adios, America,” writing, “Sending their poorest, most backward people to the United States is obviously a big help to Mexico, but it’s pretty rough on America’s landscape. The sheer numbers of immigrants tromping into the United States can’t help but to harm our wilderness areas. That’s why the largest

anti-immigration group is called ‘NumbersUSA,’ not ‘Hispanics Litter and Scorch the Earth.’ But it is also a fact that the vast majority of Teddy Kennedy immigrants [admitted after the removal of racist quotas in 1965] come from peasant cultures that have no concept of ‘litter.’”

Beck clearly realizes that while his messaging steers clear of racism, his group’s base is largely in Trump’s camp. In 2014, when a coalition of fringe anti-immigrant hate groups organized rallies to stir up resentment against the large number of unaccompanied children from Central America fleeing to the southern border of the U.S., NumbersUSA quietly promoted the protests to its email list. In 2013, as the Senate was preparing to vote on an immigration reform package, NumbersUSA spokeswoman Rosemary Jenks joined a conference call organized by Eagle Forum — a group that frequently presents immigration as an issue of racial demographics — where she warned, “If this amnesty passes, that’s it for America.”

As immigrants’ rights advocate Frank Sharry put it to the New York Times in 2007: “Roy Beck takes people who are upset about illegal immigration for different reasons, including hostility to Latino immigrants, and disciplines them so their message is based on policy rather than race-based arguments or xenophobia.”

*Citations are available at [www.pfaw.org](http://www.pfaw.org)*



## THE ANTI-IMMIGRANT LOBBY: The White Nationalist Roots of the Organizations Fighting Immigration

- Today's anti-immigration movement centers a small group of interconnected organizations all stemming from one white nationalist and population control activist, John Tanton.
- The organization tied to Tanton - including the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) and NumbersUSA - saturate media coverage of immigration issues and maintain close ties to anti-immigration politicians.
- All of these groups have ties to the dark underbelly of the anti-immigrant movement, which smears immigrants in racial terms, plays to fears of demographic change and caters to those who want the U.S. to be and remain a nation run by and for a white majority.



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