

CONTEXT

This essay appeared in 2002 in *Bad Subjects: Political Education for Everyday Life*, a journal published by a nonprofit organization that describes itself as "a collective that . . . seeks to revitalize progressive politics in retreat." According to its website, *Bad Subjects* believes that "too many people on the left have taken their convictions for granted. So we challenge progressive dogma by encouraging readers to think about the political dimension to all aspects of everyday life. We also seek to broaden the audience for leftist and progressive writing, through a commitment to accessibility and contemporary relevance" (see <http://eserver.org/badsubjects/faq/>). In what ways do you think this essay addresses the political viewpoints of people who are likely to read this journal?

either because they "feel sorry" for them or because they are being coerced to do so. The "alien" (what's up with that label?) is portrayed as the scheming good-for-nothing, while the United States citizen is just a poor little lamb who is being manipulated. Simpson states that, "Because the alien and the arranger are well aware of the risks and penalties of disclosure . . . , they feel no compunction in intimidating their United States citizen or resident alien spouses or fiancés." Simpson referred to immigrants who sought marriage for residency as "smooth-talking alien(s)" who made it a practice to convince the citizen that they were going into the marriage out of love and then once they obtained their resident status, they dumped the spouse.

It took Simpson awhile, but he eventually got his main concern off his chest when he argued that most of the illegal immigrants attempting to gain residency through marriage were doing so because they could not obtain residency otherwise. The reasons for their inability to obtain visas, according to Simpson, was because "most aliens" have broken the law in some manner—through illegal entry, or due to the fact that they are terrorists, criminals, narcotics users/dealers, or prostitutes. Note the words "MOST ALIENS."

In the early '80s, before the 1986 amendment was passed, the INS [Immigration and Naturalization Service] estimated that nearly

30% of the cases in which an immigrant had gained resident status through marriage were involved in "suspect marital relationships."

When this estimate was revised, the figure was much closer to 8%.

Television and movies portray things as if there really are hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the United States getting hitched left and right in order to stay in the country, which is not true. The media makes it seem like a piece of cake to just up and marry and all of a sudden you're an American, which is also not true. Even sadder is that the media completely trivializes the reasons why people come to this country, or why some women might be so desperate not to return to their countries that they would be willing to marry someone they don't know and potentially endure abuse.

The media rarely, if ever, mentions that many of the Central and South American countries these people are fleeing have been historically terrorized by U.S. supported regimes. The media never bothers to mention that the United States quite often turns a blind eye to the terrorism, the disappearances, the tortures, the rapes, and other abuses being suffered by people who come to this country. Apparently, immigrants are most useful to the U.S. when they are performing backbreaking labor or being the brunt of jokes.

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