

Immigrants Create U.S. Jobs

BY LEONARD A. LAUDER

The recent debate in America about immigration reform has made me wonder if we have lost sight of what we Americans are and who we are. We are a society of people who have come here from elsewhere. This melting pot has made the United States the greatest and most prosperous nation on earth. We draw our strength and character from those who landed here with nothing more than hope and dreams.

Unfortunately, some have argued that opening our borders to those who seek greater opportunities has actually stifled job formation in the U.S. Not true. By creating barriers to immigration we are forcing talented people to bring their ideas and energy to other countries, where they will compete with the U.S. in the future.

There is no doubt that immigrant entrepreneurs and their children have fueled the American economy. My mother is a prime example. Josephine Esther Mentzer was a daughter of Hungarian and Czech immigrants. Estée, as she was called by her family, started selling skin care products to beauty salons more than 65 years ago. Her creativity and hard work are today embodied in a successful global corporation that provides jobs for thousands of people in the U.S. alone.

A new report from the Partnership for a New American Economy has found that more than 40% of Fortune 500 companies were founded by immigrants or their children. Companies in the Fortune 500 founded since 1985 were

more likely to have been started by immigrants than those founded before 1985. Think of such names as Google, Intel, eBay and Yahoo!, among other newly minted iconic companies, and then remember that they were started by first-generation Americans.

In fact, more than a quarter of the high-tech and engineering businesses launched in the U.S. between 1995 and 2005 had an immigrant founder. In Silicon Valley alone, the percentage of immigrant start-up companies is more than 50%.

Despite America's economic challenges, millions of hard-working entrepreneurs want to go there. But too often they are being turned away. The visa system makes it extremely difficult for anyone with a great business idea to come to the U.S. and stay. American universities are teaching many more brilliant young foreigners, yet the immigration system often prevents them from remaining there after graduating. We should be creating incentives and opportunities for foreign students to remain in the United States.

In the competitive global economy of the 21st century, America cannot afford to turn away such talent. Immigrants who start businesses create jobs. When so many Americans are looking for work and wondering about their futures, the U.S. needs to be the magnet for those who want to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams.

Mr. Lauder is chairman emeritus of the Estée Lauder Companies.

Gli immigrati creano posti di lavoro negli Stati Uniti (ca)

