

Book Review

January 2015

Shaping Our Nation: How Surges of Migration Transformed America and Its Politics

Michael Barone,
Crown Forum, New York, 302 pages, 2013.

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Summary

Shaping Our Nation provides a great perspective on American society and the culture of urban America and its cities. The impact of different waves of immigrants is nicely illustrated in ***City of the Century, The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America*** by Donald L. Miller.

This book is intense and dense; every sentence has information or insights about our history, where we came from and how the cultural traits from Europe, Asia and Latin America created the emotional landscape upon which to build the twenty-first American century.

In the author's words: *"Americans have developed a capacity and a habit of accommodating and uniting into one nation citizens with very serious and deep differences. Americans have been doing that now for a very long time, going back to the Founding Fathers, with their formula of limited government, civic equality, and tolerance of religious and cultural diversity. It is our responsibility, as we contemplate unanticipated surges of immigration of the future, to carry forward that tradition."*

Implications for the American City

1. ***Shaping Our Nation*** is a useful book; it links European and world history with the global movement of peoples that imbued American history with the cultural assets of the immigrants and migrants that created today's society. Mr. Barone provides a strong foundation of information and insights that enable cogent thoughts about the future. The role of culture and history in every city's story is important to understand and appreciate.
2. **Two concluding thoughts** directly from ***Shaping Our Nation***; paraphrasing Mr. Barone:
 - *The Civil War was a divisive conflict, leaving the southern culture alienated from the northern one, and vice versa...for three generations.* The southern culture isolated itself from the north and did not participate in the industrial development benefits of the 1890s and beyond; and, the northern community tolerated the cultural behavior of the South. In Mr. Barone's view, even though the Civil War prevented secession, America was still two nations for three generations.
 - *World War II was an annealing event, bringing Americans together, putting them in [the same] uniform and sending them around the country, and around the world.* The post-World War II period, until around 1970, was a great period of coming together with the "big units": big business, big government and big labor; to which we can now add big cities and big

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- media. Beginning in the 70's, niche markets, personal empowerments and individual capacities to move to more congenial settings, to get personalized news, to find success in small business environments have all set a different stage for going forward. Cultural diversity is harder to find and harder to reconcile with governance, even at the local level.
3. ***The Big Sort: Why the Clustering of Like-Minded America is Tearing Us Apart***, 2008 by Bill Bishop, reveals the migration of people to communities of congeniality. America's smaller cities are experiencing this political segregation; bigger towns are experience enclaves of cultural uniformity, all of which make governance in a multi-cultural world more challenging.

Youtube:

Shaping Our Nation: Michael Barone on How Immigration Transformed America's Politics

"The great Michael Barone sits with Glenn Reynolds to discuss his new book ***Shaping Our Nation***. Barone reminds viewers of America's long tradition of cultural diversity. In fact, diversity is as old as the nation itself, and the Founding Fathers knew it. Hear how this cultural diversity shaped the early republic and continues to influence current policy."

Published on Oct 1, 2013, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PfXcclj_Le0

Published Review

BOOK REVIEW: 'Shaping Our Nation'

By Henry Olsen - Special to The Washington Times

Sunday, November 3, 2013

SHAPING OUR NATION: HOW SURGES OF MIGRATION TRANSFORMED AMERICA AND ITS POLITICS

By [Michael Barone](#)

Crown Forum, \$27, 302 pages

"Reading Michael Barone on politics and demography is like sampling a tasting menu prepared by a fine chef. His latest offering, "Shaping Our Nation: How Surges of Migration Transformed America and Its Politics," does not disappoint."

Read more: <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/nov/3/book-review-shaping-our-nation/#ixzz2rFXZa17q>

TheAmericanCity.org's Commentary

My grandfather wrote a history of our family with fascinating stories and extensive pre-internet research; among the details, the line that struck me the most was his opening where he told his descendants that despite our family being in the United States since the early 1700s, the first thing he had to learn when he went to school in the 1890s was to speak English. The Kerchers had survived and prospered in America for nearly two centuries while speaking German.

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Mr. Barone's book has a line that struck me in the same way, "...Babe Ruth and Lou Gehrig used to speak German to each other." The point is obviously not the German, although Mr. Barone has a great deal to say about the German migrations, but the fact that cultural and linguistic diversity and isolation have been a part of American culture since the beginning.

PRE-REVOLUTIONARY WAR IMMIGRATIONS

Shaping Our Nation tells the story of several mass migrations and immigrations that have happened in the United States since the 1600s and a few that surprisingly did not happen. His research is broad and his data is compelling; and while he cites many sources, *Albion's Seed* by David Hackett Fischer provides a base line for the story. The "surges" were:

- The East Anglians, 21,000 Puritans from England settled in New England in the 1630s and kept to themselves until the early 1800s when they migrated to the Great Lakes Region as far as west as Minnesota.
- The West Country English saw an estimated 30,000 people immigrate to the Chesapeake Bay Region in the 1640s and 1650s.
- The North Midland English Quakers arrived in Pennsylvania, Delaware and western New Jersey in the 1680s; about 40,000 in number.
- The Scot-Irish surge came in two waves. Beginning in 1717, one hundred and twenty-five thousand people landed in Philadelphia over four decades. From 1763 to 1775, another 125,000 people arrived from Northern Ireland and the Scottish lowlands. While they landed in Philadelphia, they all soon hit the Great Wagon Road that took them west to the Shenandoah Valley along the eastern Appalachian Mountain range and then south to the Piedmont - remember Scarlett O'Hara's father being a proud Irishman.
- The German migrations began in 1681 when the Quaker William Penn began recruiting pacifist Germans fed up with the wars in Europe and the resulting religious arrangements dictated by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648. The War of Spanish Succession [1701 – 13] reinforced the desire to immigrate and the resulting population of colonial Pennsylvania was one-third German.

Wars, religious intolerance and disease drove masses of people out of their European homes and hovels across the dangerous seas to find a more peaceful and tolerant place. Their migrations in the 1600s and early-mid 1700s set the demographic stage for the American Revolution. As Mr. Barone points out in an all too obvious but never overstated conclusion, the coming together of these culturally, linguistically and religiously disparate people..."in Philadelphia in 1774, 1775 and 1776 was the result of the efforts of men of extraordinary talent and courage..." His discussions of the depth of the disparities make the coming together seem all the more unlikely and miraculous.

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PAIRS OF PEOPLE MOVEMENTS

Shaping Our Nation continues to document, with extensive data, three pairs of migrations:

- The first pair of internal surges occurred between 1796 and 1840:
 - He describes the “Yankee Diaspora” that saw the migrations of the New Englanders to the Old Northwest Territory extended to Minnesota, and
 - The migration of “Southern Grandees” from the Carolina/Georgia coast to the Mississippi Valley.
- The second pair of immigrations extended from the 1840s to the 1890s with:
 - Three million Irish Catholics crossing the Atlantic over a fifty year span, and
 - Four and a half million German Protestants making the voyage at the same time.
 - The Civil War years did not see noticeable change in the number of immigrations although, as reported later, almost all of the immigrants went to the northern states and provided the labor pool for that greatly disadvantaged the economic development of the South.
- The third pair of immigrations were:
 - The south to north migration of African-American after the Civil War that did not happen. The end of slavery prompted almost no movement of former slaves out of the South to the North, and
 - The Ellis Island period from 1891 to 1924 with the most active period being from 1900 to 1914. Previous immigrant homelands were northern Europe, the “Ellis Islanders” hailed from southern and eastern Europe.
- Subsequent Migrations
 - African-American moving from South to North starting in the 1940’s with the War needs but ended abruptly in 1965 with the Civil Rights Acts and air conditioning made the southern heat more tolerable.
 - The movement from the Mid-West and Plains states to California after World War II which remained strong until 1970 when it slacked as the California Dream deteriorated.
 - The immigration of Asians and Latins.

EXCLUSIONARY ACTS

As Mr. Barone points out, not all of the United States history is blessed with the sentiments of the Statue of Liberty. Among other intolerable acts, we enacted:

- The Missouri Compromise of 1820,
- Indian Removal Act of 1830, leading to the “Trail of Tears” inspired by President Jackson,
- The Chinese Exclusionary Act of 1882
- The Japanese Exclusionary Act of 1907, not passed, in favor of the Gentlemen’s Agreement of 1907, which curtailed Japanese immigration,
- The Espionage Act of 1917 authorized censorship and banned treasonable materials mainly aimed at the German population.

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- Immigration Act of 1924 that closed Ellis Island and restricted immigration,
- Japanese Internment, 1942-1945, “eagerly sought by California Attorney General Earl Warren

BIG IDEAS

- “Big Units” is a term used to describe a phenomenon of the post-World War period when big government, big business and big labor ruled. Mr. Barone also discusses the concurrent rise of big cities and big media although he doesn’t link them.
- “The Big Sort”: With people of the late twentieth and early twenty first centuries having the ability to move to places of choice, people are sorting themselves by personal proclivities. “The result is what journalist Bill Bishop calls “the big sort,” with liberal areas becoming more liberal and conservative areas, more conservative.’ ” The author adds his phrase to the conversation – as he believes we are searching for “cultural congeniality”.
- The Germano- Scandinavian Provinces of the USA – Wisconsin, Iowa, Minnesota and the Dakotas – still reflect their founding culture in today’s American politics.
- Three distinct periods of American history enable direct generational transfer of culture for three significant events in American history:
 - The inauguration of President George Washington in 1789 to the end of the Civil War – 76 years [1789 – 1865; three generations],
 - People of age in 1861 [age 10] may have known someone of age during the time of Washington.
 - A person age 10 in 1789 born in 1779 would be 86 years old in 1865.
 - The end of the Civil War to Pearl Harbor [1865 – 1941] – 76 years,
 - A person age 10 in 1865, born in 1855, would have been 86 years old in 1941.
 - Pearl Harbor to 2014 – 63 years.
 - A person age 10 in 1941 would be 73 years old in 2014.
 - Direct generational transfer of feelings is possible over three generations.

Alvin Toffler’s, *The Third Wave* [1980], directly reflects the trends described by Mr. Barone. The Second Wave, beginning in the mid-17th century, is the Industrial Age that began in Western Europe and subsequently spread across the world. Key aspects of Second Wave society are the nuclear family, a factory-type education system and the corporation. Toffler writes: “*The Second Wave Society is industrial and based on mass production, mass distribution, mass consumption, mass education, mass media, mass recreation, mass entertainment, and weapons of mass destruction. You combine those things with standardization, centralization, concentration, and synchronization, and you wind up with a style of organization we call bureaucracy.*”

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