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Introduction

It's a coincidence that I'm presenting my inaugural Kit Kat essay the evening before the presidential inauguration, on the last day of Donald Trump's presidency. It was his antics at the beginning of his presidency that inspired this essay. He said, "When Mexico sends its people, they're not sending their best... they're sending people that have lots of problems, and they're bringing those problems... They're bringing drugs. They're bringing crime. They're rapists. And some," he thoughtfully added, "I assume, are good people." Trump then declared, "I will build a great wall -- and nobody builds walls better than me, believe me." Trump could afford to be a bit more like Margaret Thatcher, who said "Being powerful is like being a lady. If you have to tell people you are, you aren't."

My organization has employed hundreds of people who were born in Mexico. Most are wonderful people. On the other hand, we've employed some people from Mexico who shouldn't be in the United States. I learned this in 2007. A 20 year old I had fired a week earlier was found dead in the swimming pool of his apartment complex. His name was Juan. He was soft spoken, maybe even innocent and sweet. I let him go because he wasn't dependable or motivated enough to be successful on our team. When he applied, he presented the necessary working papers. In 2007, there was no reasonable way to check an applicant's paperwork or social security number. We would look at them, and record them. If it looked ok, they were eligible for hire. To suspect an applicant of being undocumented, when they in fact, had the proper documents, would have been unmistakable discrimination. Only in the last few years, has a program called E-Verify enabled us to check the legal status of applicants in real time. Well, Juan's death revealed that his paperwork was fake. He was not 20 years old. He was 15. He lived with an older sibling and several teenagers from Mexico. He stayed up late one night drinking beer, and drowned in the pool by himself. His friends said he couldn't swim.

I am not a sociologist, an anthropologist, a political scientist, or an economist. Nor am I a lawyer, or much of a historian. So Trump's comments made me think of a lot of questions. For instance: Who is being helped, and who is being hurt by boarder crossings like the one that Juan must have made? How about from legal immigration to the US? Are we exploiting them, are they exploiting us, or is this an example of wealth creation that helps us all? Is supporting immigration at odds with supporting the

American middle class? Is a hole in our boarder something that drains opportunity and economic resources from struggling blue collar Americans, or is the immigrant a kind of fuel for the economic engine of our country? What is with the notion that people who came early in our history are called colonists or settlers, while those who came later are called immigrants? Should I be more compassionate towards Americans on the other side of the country, or Mexicans that live in my home town? What does it even mean to be an American? And how can a country created and built by immigrants, be so confused about their role, their value, and their cost?

Armed with these questions, I started exploring the history of US immigration and quickly learned that we have been confused about the role of immigrants since the beginning. I came to realize that my questions have been asked many times before, all over the world, over many centuries. Author Paul Johnson points out that, “the study of history is a powerful antidote to contemporary arrogance. It is humbling to discover how many of our glib assumptions, which seem to us novel and plausible, have been tested before, not once but many times and in innumerable guises; and discovered to be, at great human cost, wholly false.” Thomas Sowell, the omniscient, 90 year economist of Stanford University, adds “History cannot provide direct answers to the quandaries of the present... because there are too many variables that change between one era and another. But if history cannot provide answers, it can at least help in defining the questions.”

These days, many of us are focused on the contrast between the “haves” and “have-nots.” This contrast is especially heartbreaking when you compare our nation’s prosperity and freedom with the insecurity and poverty that exists in nations at the opposite end of the spectrum; the result of political, cultural, historical, and environmental forces that have led to vast differences in opportunity and what some people call “human capital,” the skills, knowledge, and experience of a person or population.

None of us have any control over the timing, location, or circumstances of our birth. It is the ultimate lottery. I am humbly grateful that I was given a winning ticket. But rather than focus on the “haves” and “have-nots” this evening, I will share a few stories about the “doers” and the “do-nots.” Because in looking for answers about immigration, I found stories about actual immigrants, real people with personal histories, who displayed extraordinary bravery, faced unexpected losses, and lived fascinating lives.

And with that, I’ll begin my essay:

Steamships & Coyotes

A Story About Fred and Art,
and Their Immigration to the United States

Fred and Art came to the United States from different countries. Art was 17 years old when he first came, and Fred was 19 when he arrived. Art had two older brothers that came before him and encouraged him to come. Fred had one older brother who preceded him to the US and a younger brother who came afterwards. Neither of Fred's brothers stayed in the US. Neither of Art's brothers stayed either, although one returned later on.

Both Fred and Art moved to cities and neighborhoods where other immigrants from their hometown lived. At first they both found *very* low-paying jobs working for men from their respective homelands. Fred went to work for a linen merchant, helping as an office and storeroom clerk. His inflation adjusted income was \$230 per week, an income that would earn him \$12,000 per year. Art went to work as a construction laborer. He was thankful to have a job. He worked 6 days a week, 16 hours a day, for \$300 per week... that's about \$3 per hour.

Within their first year, both Fred and Art recognized opportunities to change jobs, advance, and eventually start their own businesses. They both did just that. Each eventually created businesses with their brothers who lived abroad. Both businesses thrived, and helped to support the rest of their extended families abroad.

Eventually, both men married American-born women, who were themselves the children of immigrants from the same countries as Art and Fred. Art's mother and father-in-law were actually from his very same village.

Fred and Art never knew each other. Fred came to the United States nearly 110 years ago by crossing the Atlantic on a *steamship* named the SS Rochambeau. Art came to the United States in 2003 by hiking through the Sonoran Desert with the guidance of a human smuggler known as a *coyote*. They didn't know each other, but they both took part in something I will call the great American immigration story.

The great American immigration story could start with Christopher Columbus, even if he didn't know where he was going, and didn't know where he had been. Nevertheless, it seems to have been Columbus that triggered the European colonization of the New World. And for the next four and half centuries, Europeans and their enslaved cargo, migrated overseas in ever-growing numbers. By the end of the 1700's shortly after our nation was born, about 65% of our population was of British decent, 20% were of African decent, 10% represented other parts of Europe, and the remaining 5% were from around the world.

Although I said the great American immigration story *could* start with Christopher Columbus, it probably *should* start with the Native Americans, who were not technically immigrants at all. An immigrant, is a migrant who has crossed an international boundary. The Native Americans were simply migrants, having crossed that ancient land bridge from Asia thousands of years before international borders existed.

But it appears that not even Native Americans are native to America. In fact, the English that established colonial America were not even indigenous to England. Nor are the Turks of today, indigenous to Turkey. This list could go on and on, because migration has been fundamental to human existence since the beginning of man.

Influences on the migration of people can be categorized as Push, Pull, and Means. *Push* forces: such as famine, war, or economic pressures that *push* people from their homeland; *Pull* forces: such as nice weather, freedom from military service, or good job opportunities, that *pull* a migrant to a new place, and the *Means*: the ability of the migrant to get to where they want to go. Prehistoric means of migration were limited by the distance a person could walk, or perhaps float on their raft, and the geographic barriers they could cross. Prehistoric man migrated primarily for environmental reasons, people in search of plentiful food and agreeable weather... like retirees that migrate to Florida. Later migrations were influenced by the creation of ancient empires and medieval dynasties... conquerers conquering, and refugees fleeing.

As transportation technology evolved through the ages, the means of migration made it faster and safer. Soon sailors were sailing, explorers were exploring, and colonizers were colonizing. And today, air travel makes global migration feasible for almost anyone. Immigrants from all over the globe relocate looking for security, or because their human capital is more valuable somewhere else than at home. Today, more than 250 million people have moved away from their country of birth. Many of these immigrants leave home with the intention of returning one day. Those that do return, can simply be considered sojourners. Alternatively, 10% of the world's immigration population are refugees, who rarely ever return home. And so we can see that the economic and political factors around the world continue to have a pushing and pulling effect on people who are both willing, and have the means to migrate, just as they have for millennia.

That brings us back to the great American immigration story. Which, as you know, wasn't *all* great... Africans didn't come to the Americas seeking opportunity, they were enslaved. And if they were lucky enough to get here alive, they arrived as property in bondage. Centuries later, six million of their decedents participated in another migration, one of the largest human migrations in history, as they migrated to the North away from segregation and discrimination. Six million people is double the entire current population of Mississippi. This Great Northern Migration is an example of humans doing what

needs to be done, to build a better life for themselves. It wasn't, and still isn't, fair or easy. This is the essence of the great American immigration story. Humans... *doing*... to build a better life for themselves. It is this *doing* that has made the story of American immigration, both past *and* present, primarily a success story.

Fred and Art came to the United States seeking economic opportunity. When you consider all the immigrants to the US, from colonial times until today, whether they came by ship, by plane, or as in Art's case, by foot, the vast majority have come for the same reason as Fred and Art, seeking economic opportunity.

Art's real full name is Arturo Rubio. He is a friend of mine, and he works in my restaurant company. He started his career with us in 2013, 10 years after he first walked across the Desert as a 17 year old. He started as a cook in our kitchen, while working a second job at another restaurant company. Well-managed restaurants are reluctant to



schedule an employee more than 40 hours per week, because overtime laws require time-and-a-half pay for the additional hours. The common solution for hardworking immigrants is to work *two* full time jobs of 40 hours. This might include prepping food at the Northstar Cafe for eight hours each morning, followed by a job as a busboy at a popular steak house in the evenings. In this way, Arturo was earning more than \$60,000 dollars per year. Eventually we invited him to quit his second job, and join our management team. He could reduce his schedule from 80 hours per week to a mere 60, and there would be opportunity for

additional career growth. Today, Arturo is the head chef of the Northstar Cafe in Westerville, Ohio. In this role he is our business partner and shares in the profits of his restaurant.

In 2017, Arturo and I went on a 10 day mountain expedition together with the National Outdoor Leadership School. On this trip, I started to hear parts of his story that you don't get to ask about in a job interview.



Arturo's family lived on the remains of a once expansive cattle ranch outside the village of El Capulin, Mexico. His great-grandfather had owned all of the land in the area, including the village. It was probably thousands of acres. By the time Arturo was born, his father and uncles had subdivided and sold most of the land. Their once-great family ranch had been reduced to a few plots of land that were being used for near-subsistence living. He can remember that his uncles still had nice cars when he was

little. Arturo's immediate family had about 20 cows that they milked. The family would sell the milk door to door, house to house, from a big jar. Arturo puts it simply when he says, "my dad wasn't really smart enough to grow the business and also take care of the family." In fact, his father would often take the money earned selling the milk, and travel hours to the nearest horse track to gamble it away. He remembers one evening when he was a very little boy, he was helping his mother feed the cows when his father came home from the track. She asked about the money from the milk, and he hit her in front of Arturo.

When he was 5, Arturo remembers accidentally knocking over and spilling the 20 gallon bucket of fresh milk. "That was all the milk we had to sell the next day," he tells me, almost tearfully, 30 years later. Arturo had an uncle who grew enough corn and beans on his land to take them to the market and sell. They would walk through towns and sell along the way. He told me the story like this, "when I was six, I would go and help my uncle do his work. I used to make about two dollars per week. By that time I had a dog, it was a female and it had puppies. I told my mom, I'm going to take the puppies and sell them. The first stop, I sold two dogs! Before we got to the market, I sold all of my puppies! As I went the rest of the way to the town, I thought of all the things I would buy with the money; cereals, vegetables, fruit... I bought a giant watermelon! When I saw my mom I said, 'I sold all my dogs!' And gave her the leftover money and all the food."

That day, Arturo used some of the money he made to buy a bag of potato chips for himself, and he ate them along the way? "I got sick from not washing my hands," he says, "soon I couldn't eat or drink, my mouth was totally raw. I lost all my weight. And after two weeks, everyone could see my bones. They thought I would die." His family couldn't pay for a doctor. But by good fortune, a neighbor in town was going to medical school. He visited Arturo and brought him medicine without charging the family.

Soon after this, Arturo's father began hitting him. He hit him every day until Arturo was 12 years old. "You always want more Arturo," he would say critically. "It's no good." His father and uncles certainly practiced what they were preaching. They continued to sell everything they could until they were all living in near poverty. That year, when he was 12, his older brothers who were 15 and 17 went to the United States for the first time. They went to Columbus, Ohio. "When I was growing up, someone would go to the US, and come back in three or four years with a nice truck and some money. When my brothers went, they had too much fun, going to night clubs and stuff. The money they saved from three and half years was almost nothing."

When Arturo was 17, he finished high school and applied to college. He was accepted. His father said he wasn't going to be able to go to college. "You need to start working. Don't waste your time." Arturo's brothers wouldn't give him any financial

support to go. He had his acceptance to the university, but no way to pay for it. Then his friend says “I’m going to the US, you want to come? You need eighteen hundred dollars for the coyote.” So Arturo called his brothers, and they gave him the money.

Coyotes, the animals, play a colorful role in the folklore of central American people. The coyote’s creative trickery and thievery is often on display in stories of coyotes outwitting farmers to steal their livestock. The everyday use of the term coyote in Mexico, usually refers to a middleman, or a person hired to help evade a bureaucratic regulation of some kind. Or it is used in the way Arturo used it, to describe a guide hired to help migrants cross the border illegally. David Spencer points out that “employing coyotes is part of everyday life in much of Mexico... where burdensome requirements... imposed by sluggish bureaucracies, can result in lengthy delays [for] even the most basic services. Thus, although people employing a coyote may not feel that doing so is entirely proper, they are unlikely to think of doing so as immoral or criminal... At the same time, they are likely to view coyotes as slippery and devious characters, quite in accordance with the cultural mythology.”

These days, the coyotes along the borders are often associated with the drug cartels that seem to control Mexico. In his 2019 memoir, *On the Plain of Snakes*, about his journey through Mexico, Paul Theroux writes that he was to find that no one in Mexico ever used the word “cartel” or spoke the name of a gang... “What I heard, when I asked, was always a hot whisper, no louder than a shallow breath.”

Arturo and his friend drove 20 hours into Sonora, Mexico to meet the coyote. They were supposed to be staying in a hotel for \$100 per night on top of the \$1,800 they had already paid. “We get to the hotel and it was *nasty*. We were about fifty people in a big room with chickens... it seemed like a chicken coop.” Cocaine and beer were provided by the cartel... by 7 or 8 o’clock, there were prostitutes. This was the cartel catering to the young men who had been through this before. It was the first time Arturo saw cocaine. Arturo’s friend asked him if he was going to try anything... Arturo declined.



The next day, they drove the migrants near to the border. When they got out of the buses there were three men there... the coyotes. “They were joking around” said Arturo, “but you could tell they were dangerous assholes. They were using cocaine the entire time.” Then they began to hike on a trail into the desert. Within the first ten minutes, five other men with guns stopped them. It was clear that it was coordinated, and they were from the same cartel as the coyotes. But the coyotes pretended to be surprised.

The group he was with ranged in age from about 14 to about 40 years old. They were carrying whatever they thought they would need for a week-long journey through the desert, and to start life in a new country. Arturo had the cloths on his back, food, water, money, and a warm jacket for the cold nights, The men with the guns told them to strip naked. Then they took everything of value; all the money, any nice cloths, and Arturo's warm jacket. It's worth noting here, that most migrant deaths crossing the border, are caused by the desert heat, or the desert cold at night. Not having his jacket was the most miserable part of the journey for Arturo.



They eventually got caught by boarder patrol while they were resting one morning after hiking through the night. Arturo remembers that the agents spoke politely, they had no guns and weren't threatening. When the agents turned their backs, Arturo ran, and he ran. Eventually he met up with the others that got away and hiked another six days with the coyotes in the desert of Arizona, occasionally running and hiding from additional boarder patrol. The last few days they drank water from cow troughs that were scattered throughout the dessert for American ranchers. By this time they had no food.



They finally got to a road, and old van pulled up. They piled in so tight that they couldn't move. The van took them to Tucson, Arizona where they were given food, soda, and beer. The next day, the same crew took them to Columbus, Ohio... the final destination on their ticket.

Going back to the 1800's, Mexicans were encouraged to cross the boarder to work in American agriculture of the Southwest and California. There were no federal limitations on immigration. The boarder itself was relatively harmonious. Concerns about the border didn't begin in earnest until the passing of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The first wall on the Mexican boarder was built in 1909 to help keep Chinese people from illegally crossing. Incidentally, Chinese and Indian nationals are still commonly caught crossing the boarder with the assistance of smugglers. The Immigration Act and Asian Exclusion Act of 1924, did even more to keep "undesirable" Asians and Eastern Europeans from entering the country. Still, Mexicans enjoyed wide latitude in crossing the boarder and working legally in the US.

The anti-immigrant stance reflected in the Acts of 1882 and 1924, wasn't new. Even Ben Franklin, the Prophet of Tolerance himself, was unhappy that his

Pennsylvania was one-third German. In 1753 he stated that the German immigrants "... are generally of the most ignorant stupid sort of their own nation... not being used to liberty, they know not how to make a modest use of it." Author David Gerber noted that Franklin complained that the Germans refused to learn English, and that the colonial legislature would eventually need to translate its proceedings so that the delegates could understand one another. Eventually "Franklin and others learned that the protests were futile in light of what would abide for the next 150 years as the principle rationale for a liberal immigration policy: a land rich in resources needed cheap labor to fulfill its seemingly limitless potential."

When the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was passed, it was intended to fix the wrongs of the 1924 acts. However, it introduced for the first time, limits on immigration from countries in the western hemisphere, including Mexico. This quickly led to rising numbers of undocumented immigrants in the U.S.

Today, 45 million people living in the United States are foreign born immigrants. That's about 14% of the population. 25% of those immigrants are unauthorized to be here. Of those, about half are from Mexico. In case you're still doing math in your head, that is 5 million unauthorized Mexicans in the US right now. That population is down 2 million from the peak in 2007.

As you already know, Arturo got his first job working for another Mexican. He was painting and doing drywall work more than 90 hours a week for about three dollars an hour... which he did for several months. The first two times he was paid, cash of course, he sent it all straight home to his mother. After that, he had to pay his brothers back for the coyote. Eventually Arturo started working two full-time jobs... He worked at Bravo and The Cheesecake Factory. It was 2003 and he was 17. Unlike his brothers he didn't go to nightclubs and spend all his money. He worked hard and saved. His plan was to return to Mexico and pay for his own University education. At this time his older brother at home in Mexico was working at a successful tortilla factory. Arturo asked if he knew how to do everything at the Factory? The brother said yes, so Arturo sent home over twenty thousand dollars of savings to help his brother and family open their own tortilla factory.

Total global remittances, the money immigrants send home to their families, was estimated at over seven hundred billion dollars in 2019. The largest beneficiaries were India, China, and Mexico. Historically, remittances outpace international aid to developing countries around the world. And when compared to the bureaucratic distribution of aid, it quite efficiently reaches the hands of working class or impoverished families. It's hard to imagine a better mechanism for helping so many people in need, in so many different places around the world.

By the time Arturo was 20, he had also saved enough to pay for his college education and to buy the car he used to drive himself home to El Capulin. When he got back, he helped his family with the tortilla factory which was ready to prosper. The factory needed employees to keep up, and it needed salesmen selling tortillas from village to village and running delivery routes to stores. He also retook his college entrance exams and re-applied to three different universities. Unfortunately, he underestimated the challenge and wasn't as prepared as he was coming out of high school. All of his applications were denied. Despite the growing success of the tortilla factory, which for the next 10 years was able to provide jobs and a well-off lifestyle for his entire family, Arturo was not as comfortable at home in Mexico as he was at home in Columbus, Ohio. So later that year, he decided to return.

He crossed the border illegally again. He tried to go a different way, with different coyotes, but in the end, his second experience was almost identical to the first one... only this time he wore an old ragged jacket, and didn't bring any cash. Back in Columbus, he fell in love with a woman whose parents who were from El Capulin, Mexico. She was born here, so she was a US citizen. That allowed Arturo to gain legal working status. Then, in 2013, he applied for a job at the Northstar Cafe.

Arturo and his wife had a son named Michael. You can see in Arturo's eyes how important it is for him to be a wonderful father. He's loving and nurturing to his son in a way that his own father wasn't. And he's eager to show his son what hard work and ambition look like as well.

Sadly, after almost a decade of marriage, he and his wife went through a painful separation. Around this time, Arturo also realized that the family's tortilla business in Mexico was declining. Actually the whole family in Mexico was declining. They got used to having money but never got smart about it. His father started purchasing horses as an expensive hobby. Arturo's brothers would go to the race track to gamble, and they would spend their evenings at rooster fights for fun. His mom was still waking each morning at 4am to lead the factory. But his brothers and father would sleep in and stopped going into work at all. They still haven't returned any of his initial investment in the factory. He looks heartbroken by their arrogance and bad decisions, wishing they could be just a little more thoughtful and humble.

Now we will turn our attention to Fred, Arturo's counterpart in this story. Fred was my grandfather. He was born in 1892, or maybe 1893, or 94. The date was written on the inside cover of a bible that the family apparently left behind in Lebanon. His birthplace was the city of Beirut, but it wasn't called Lebanon then. It was a region known as Mount Lebanon, a small Christian province within the large Muslim, Ottoman Empire. Fred and all the people of Mount Lebanon were subjects of the Ottoman Sultan.

Beirut was predominantly Maronite Christian. The Maronites traced their roots to the birth of Christianity and are now a branch within the Catholic church. Although the region belonged to the Sultan in Istanbul, because of its historical significance as a trading port, and its large Maronite Catholic population, Mount Lebanon had close independent relationships with France and Italy.

Little is known about Fred's life during this time, except that he had two brothers, two sisters, and several Malhame cousins in Beirut. Outside of Beirut the name did not seem to exist yet. The Malhame's came from a long line of Maronite warriors and merchants. According Jens Hanssen, Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Toronto, the family was given the name al-malhama, or "epic slayer" when one ancestor distinguished himself in battle, fending off invading Russians in the Early 1700's,

For centuries and centuries past, this part of the world was the nexus of east-west trade routes, a key stop on the "silk road," which carried raw silk and spices from Asia to Europe through a network of exchanges, brokers, and agents. The people of this part of the world, over centuries, developed skills and knowledge as brokers and merchants. They developed banking systems that could issue credit and insurance to facilitate the movement of goods from the producer to the consumer. This enabled the people of this part of the world to develop a type of valuable human capital that they carried with them in migration.

As Jews were exiled from their homeland, and migrated throughout Europe and the world over thousands of years, to make up what is now called the Jewish Diaspora, they brought this human capital with them and passed it along through generations. Jews have become important middlemen in banking, brokering, and trading wherever they have gone. Sociologists have named these people the "middleman minorities." We have all repeatedly seen the image of the Jewish or Arab peddler, selling his goods in a foreign land. Because of their role in the silk trade, Jews and Arabs developed the textile industries throughout the western world. They became manufacturers, importers, and merchants. Just a few of the famous Jewish textile merchants in the US include recognizable names like: Levi Strauss, Bloomingdale, Macy's, Saks, Neiman Marcus, and Columbus's very own Simon Lazarus, and if you were wondering if the next generation inherited the human capital of the middleman minority, consider the more recent empires of Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, and Leslie Wexner.

It is worth pointing out the problem with being a middleman minority. As minorities, bias towards them has been prevalent throughout the ages, the most obvious example being the Holocaust during WWII. But that was by no means the first time and place the Jews had been persecuted. In his book *Migrations and Cultures*, Thomas Sowell asks the question "What is there about middleman minorities that

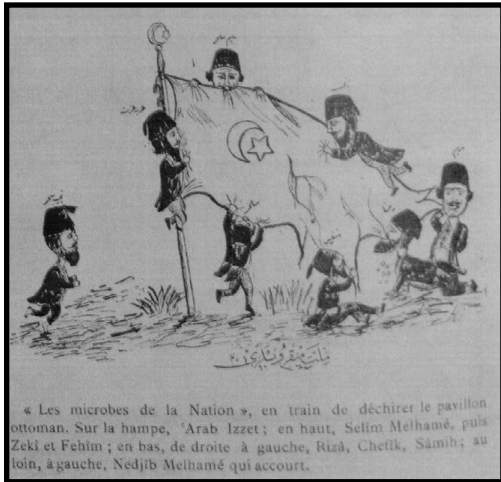
provokes such venomous hostility? ...[they] have seldom been violent people themselves who might have initiated such hostilities... Perhaps what intensifies these feelings against them is that they perform economic functions which have been much misunderstood and condemned through history, regardless of who has performed these functions.” Sowell continues “While his economic functions define the middleman, the middleman *minority* usually exists where the local population does not provide its own middlemen, for one reason or another.... or local middlemen are simply not able to meet the competition from groups of foreigners long experienced in such occupations.... Groups with generations— or centuries— of experience as middleman minorities obviously have many advantages in the demanding field, where shrewd understanding, hard work, long hours, and inescapable risks are the norm.” The notion that middlemen, in other words, salesmen, bankers, traders, and brokers, are “useless parasites, has been tested empirically in different parts of the world, and in various periods of history,” including our own, in the present day.

Fred left Beirut sometime around the age of 14. Few specifics are known about Fred’s childhood and what inspired him to leave Lebanon. Between the years 1870 and 1924, over 100,000 predominantly Christian immigrants traveled from modern day Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine to the United States. There were numerous pushing and pulling forces. One specific example is that Christian families were afraid that their young boys would be conscripted into the Ottoman army, which often put them into Christian work camps, never to be seen again. This happened for centuries throughout the ottoman empire, and happened again during WWI.

But I believe the Young Turk Revolution that took place in Istanbul in 1908 caused the Malhame family to flee Beirut, only to return 15 years later, after WWI. *Why would a political revolution 1,000 miles away in Istanbul, inspire the Malhames to leave?*

What I discovered while interviewing my now deceased father and his still living sister Renee, was that Fred had two uncles named Salim and Najib Malhame, who were Turkish government officials... that’s all they remembered. My research revealed that in the late 1800’s, Salim and Najib had risen to become prominent dignitaries in the court of the Ottoman Sultan, Abdulhamit II. They excelled as loyal servants of his regime.

Najib Pasha Malhame was made a vizier, and was placed in charge of the sultan’s security, a position he earned after interrupting an assassination attempt on the Sultan. Salim Pasha Malhame was also made vizier to the Sultan. He helped appoint the governors of Mount Lebanon. At his peak, he was elevated to the head of the ministry of Forests, Mines, and Agriculture, among the top economic posts in the government at the time. And his influence helped Beirut to be named a capital city for its



This satirical cartoon is a caricature of the Malhame brothers eating the flag. The caption calls out Salim and Najib Malhame by name and calls them the "Parasites of the Nation."

region in 1888. Both brothers maintained homes in Beirut, and palaces near the Sultan in Istanbul.

When the Young Turk Revolution took place in 1908, the aim was to force the Sultan to reinstate a constitution he had abolished 30 years earlier. According to middle east scholar, Jens Hannsen, as the revolution took hold, protestors singled out Salim and Najib Malhame as villains. The Malhames were in the limelight of the revolution. They became the prominent scapegoats in revolutionary propaganda. According to Hannsen, the Young Turks did not rebel against the authority of the Sultan, but rather his Christian, Arab entourage who were promoting Western notions of civilization and progress.



This depicts Salim Malhame, the Sultan's minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Mining, as a type of tree fungus.



This caricature of Najib has the caption "Najib Lost His Way"



Evidence that not a lot has changed in political satire over the last 110 years.

Salim fled with his family to Italy. Najib was arrested. Another one of their brothers and his wife were killed that year. It is imaginable to me, that this is the year that my grandfather and his family left Beirut. In fact, it seems possible that all the Malhames fled Mount Lebanon out of fear, only to return after World War I.

During the war, the Ottomans sided with the Germans, the allies cut off all shipping lanes to the Ottoman's territory, including the middle east. And then, a literal plague of locusts entered Mount Lebanon and, just like in the old testament, "they covered each and every tree of the land and ate all that was there to be eaten." During the next three years of the war, the Ottomans facilitated the starvation of half the

Christians in Mount Lebanon, around 200,000 people. During this same time, the Ottoman's wiped out an estimated one million other Christians in the Armenian genocide. Fred passed down no stories about suffering or starvation in Lebanon during the War. This is another reason why I believe his entire family may have left in 1908.

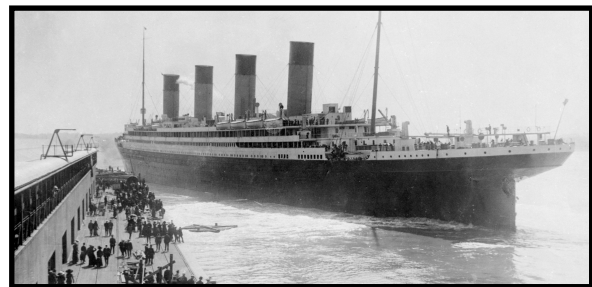


SS Rochambeau pulling into port at Le Havre

The first official documentation I have for my grandfather, was from his arrival at Ellis Island, when he was 19. It was May of 1912. The shipping manifest says that his last place of residence was Egypt, and that his closest relative, his father, was also in Egypt.

The manifest says that his ship, the SS Rochambeau, departed from La Havre, France, on May 10th. Its capacity, including the crew was

over 1,800 people. La Havre, is located on the English channel directly across from Southhampton Docs, where another, even larger steamship departed from the English Channel a few weeks earlier, also headed for New York. It had over 2,200 people on board. Its name was the Titanic.

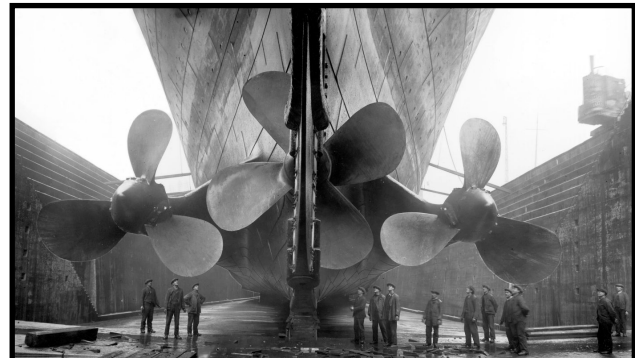
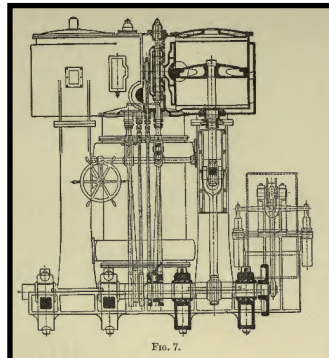
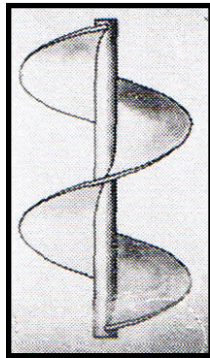


RMS Titanic

The Steamship, as a means of migration, may have been one of the most important forces to impact the history of American immigration. Prior to the modern steamship, migrants used sailing vessels to cross the Atlantic. But sailing vessels were slow, and unpredictable. Migrants would gather in ports and wait for boats to arrive. Then they would board these vessels with strangers from around the world, cramped into dirty, crowded quarters. As we have all been reminded this year, the migration of people spreads disease. Often throughout world history, this simple fact has wiped out massive populations of people whose bodies were not prepared to resist the new infections. In our own history, the Native Americans and African slaves seemed to suffer the worst. But European migrants also suffered. Between disease and shipwrecks, it is estimated that one out of twelve European migrants perished during the journey across the Atlantic.

The most important inventions in the evolution of the steamship were the screw-propeller, the compound engine, and later the triple expansion engine. In fact, the ubiquitous SS that typically comes before a ship's name stands for "Screw Steamer." These made the machinery of propulsion much more efficient, allowing steamships to

carry less coal, and more cargo, get bigger, travel faster, and stay on schedule. By the 1870's, a European migrant could arrive in port a day before departure, purchase an affordable ticket as a steerage passenger, and arrive in New York safely 10 days later.



This technology set off a historic wave of European immigration. In the 50 year period from 1820 to 1870, a mere 5 million people migrated from Europe to the United States. In the next fifty years following these innovations, from 1870 until the 1920's, 25 million people immigrated to the United States, a 500% increase. During this period, the immigrant population was consistently between 13% and 15% of the US population. This is roughly the same percentage we are experiencing now, 100 years later.

The immigrants who arrived between 1870 and 1920, were generally not of British decent. They were from “less desirable” regions of Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. After World War I, Congress passed into law the previously mentioned Immigration Act and Asian Exclusion Act of 1924. These used the 1880 US census data to establish a quota system limiting future immigration. Note that this 1880 census data represented the US population *before* the large wave of undesirable immigrants arrived.

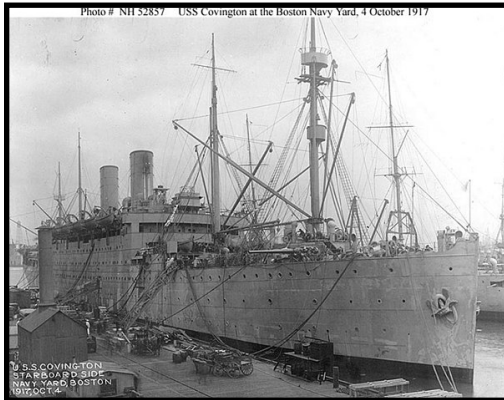
It turns out that the Middle East is technically a part of Asia and should be included in the Asian Exclusion Act. But the immigration officials struggled to determine whether they should treat Middle Easterners as Asians. In practice, Middle Easterners were allowed in, but not allowed to apply for citizenship. Thankfully for Fred, this changed in 1915, when a Syrian named George Dow appealed lower court decisions denying his application for naturalization. In the words of the Circuit Judge who oversaw the case *Dow v United States*, from then on “inhabitants of a portion of Asia, including Syria, [are] to be classified as white persons.”

When Fred arrived in NY, he got a job with a Lebanese merchant who sold linens and other textiles. He was earning \$230 a week as a clerk in the office and stock room. One day early on, Fred was asked to retrieve an elegant table linen for the owner to show a customer. Knowing how much the merchant was paying for the table linen, he was astounded to learn how much the customer was buying it for.

Within months, Fred and his brother Wadih were establishing their own importing business for table linens to serve the luxury market of New York. They summoned their younger brother Fouad to join them in New York. They soon had the capital needed for Wadih to move to Florence, Italy. There they built a linen factory for Wadih to manage, so they could produce their own linens for Fred to import and sell in New York. In the years before and after the war, they made many voyages between New York and Italy. This was only possible because of the fast, dependable nature of the modern steamship.



SS Cincinnatti



SS Cincinnatti converted into USS Covington



USS Covington sinking off the coast of France

Fred's first return trip from Italy in 1913 was aboard a particularly interesting steamship named the SS Cincinnatti. I doubt Fred could have imagined that his grandsons would one day own a restaurant in Cincinnatti. The ship was a part of the German owned Hamberg -America Line. In 1914, when war was declared in Europe, the boat was seized by the US government while it was in port in Boston. When the US entered the war, the ship was converted into a military transport vessel by the Navy and renamed the USS Covington. That year, with 800 soldiers on board, the Covington was hit by a torpedo from a German submarine off the coast of France. Fortunately the navy had enough time to take a photograph... and rescue all but six men.

As I mentioned earlier, World War I, brought famine and Genocide to Christians under Ottoman rule, and the war eventually brought an end to the 600 year old Ottoman Empire. Fred must have been thankful to be in the United States, and not Lebanon. But apparently he wasn't that thankful... because he left New York, and went to, of all places, Mexico, so that he wouldn't be drafted into the US army. The Lebanese fear of being conscripted into the army apparently ran pretty deep.

After the war, when France was charged with dividing the Middle East and helping new nations establish their Independence, the Patriarch of the

Maronite Church, Elias Hoayek, played a central role in negotiating the terms for his homeland Lebanon. He foolishly expanded the Lebanese territory to include farmland, while maintaining a 51% Christian majority. The other 49% of the population was Muslim. Then he helped establish a constitution that required the president of the new nation to *always* be a Maronite Christian. When it was time to elect the first president, Patriarch Hoayek campaigned for Najib Malhame to be nominated as the first president of Lebanon. Najib failed to earn the nomination and died the following year. Not surprisingly, Lebanon has been in some form of Civil War or crises for the 100 years since its boundaries and constitution were established. Nevertheless, in 2019 Patriarch Hoayek was declared a saint by Pope Francis.



Patriarch of the Maronite Church, Elias Hoayek



Shortly after the war, Fred married the American born daughter of successful Lebanese immigrants who were also in the textile business. In 1921, when Fred was 27, his father passed away. Then a few years later, his little brother Fouad returned to Lebanon to be married, and in the celebrations leading up to the wedding, Fouad contracted food poisoning from goat cheese and died. Three months after that Fred's mother died, apparently of a broken heart. Fred and Wadih, used their growing wealth to construct a moseleum for their parents and brother to be laid to rest in their homeland of Lebanon.

Fred and Wadi continued to build their import and export business, and send regular financial support to their sisters who were now back in Lebanon, that is, if they ever left

... no one alive today seems to know for sure. When one sister was married in 1926, her brothers hosted a lavish reception in New York City. The Lebanese couple made the trip to New York aboard a steamship of course. The reception apparently had two strange men from the mafia in attendance. They were needed so that the guests could enjoy a bit of whiskey despite it being in the middle of prohibition.



Wedding Reception Given By Mr. Wady & Mr. & Mrs. Fred Malhame
In Honor Of Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Mesquitee

Hotel St. George
New York May The 8th 1926

Photo By Chas. Matar, N.Y.

And then, in 1929, the stock market crashed. Fred, and his brother Wadih in Italy, lost everything they had. Fred, his wife and their two daughters had to move out of their home in the Lebanese neighborhood of Bay Ridge, Brooklyn. Wadih, his wife and two daughters were in a similar situation in Florence. Fred had to shut down his business, and he never again had the capital or heart to reopen it. In total, his personal fortune, worth two million dollars in 1929, completely vanished... as though it never existed. He would never regain anything close that again. On top of that, neither Fred nor Wadih had any sons, and their third brother was dead. It appeared that no one would be carrying forward their branch of the Malhame name. But before we finish Fred's story, I would like to revisit Arturo's story one more time.

As a permanent resident of the United States, Arturo now has the legal ability to fly to and from Mexico at his discretion. Nevertheless, he is still applying for his US citizenship, because Ohio is now his home. He is studying hard for the test. He's not going to take anything for granted.

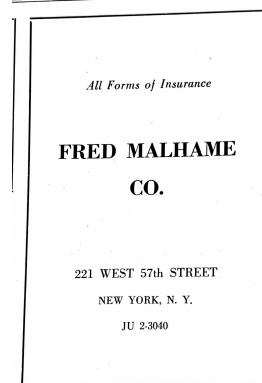
He still travels back to Mexico regularly, sometimes bringing along Michael. It is important to him to share his heritage with his son. With the support of his mother, Arturo said to his father and brothers "You guys don't want to work. It's ok. I'm gonna sell the tortilla business to get my investment out, and I'm going back to the United States. And I don't want you calling me for money afterwards." This threat, designed to get a reaction, was all it took to get them out of bed in the morning. One brother has since taken charge and is doing a great job running the business.

On a recent trip to Mexico, Arturo scheduled a doctors appointment with the medical school student who saved his life as a six year old boy. Arturo described the experience this way. "I went in and told the doctor who I was, and he couldn't believe it. He canceled all of his appointments for the rest of the day, and we spent all afternoon talking to each other about our lives over the last 30 years."

When I asked Arturo why he is so patient and supportive of his family in Mexico, he answered quietly, "I think..., I think I'm still trying to repay my parents for the bucket of milk I spilled when I was 5."

Thomas Sowell points out "the history of immigrants who began in poverty and achieved prosperity, while at the same time advancing the economic level of the society around them, brings into sharper focus the importance of *creating* wealth, especially important when so many are preoccupied with its distribution. Such immigrants have left a legacy not only of economic examples but also of human inspiration."

After the stock market crash. Fred looked for a place where a Middle Eastern immigrant could add value in a struggling economy. In quintessential middleman minority fashion, he found that place as a broker... a broker of insurance... a cog in the financial system that helps mitigate financial risk. Insurance is a financial tool created centuries earlier by Middle Easterners along the silk road.



My Father,
John Malhame

Despite losing everything, he continued to send money to his sisters in Lebanon. Then he had another daughter, and finally a son, my father, someone who might produce the next generation of Malhames. Eventually, Fred made enough money to afford moving his family back to Bay ridge Brooklyn, where other Lebanese families, lived. In 1945, his oldest daughter died of polio when she was 17. In 1952, his youngest daughter was selected to represent the nation of Lebanon, for the Miss United Nations pageant, despite being born and raised in New York City. Renee actually won the pageant and became Miss United Nations.

The caption of this photo reads: "Rene Malhame (center) of Lebanon was judged "miss United Nations" at a fashion show held at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel in New York City. Young women of the United Nations colony were models at the show. Close contenders for the title won by Miss Malhame were Blanca Alvarez (left) of Venezuela and Myra Yaron of Israel. Many types of feminine beauty from far away lands competed in the show that designated Miss



Malhame as the fairest." This photo of her was reproduced in news papers and magazines across the country and around the world. This particular copy of the photo was taken from the Ohio State Latern. On the next page was a photo of the famous football coach Woody Hayes. Fred's son fell in love with a blond beauty from Kentucky, who was working as a flight attendant with Pan American Airlines at the time (my mother). When he decided to marry her, his parents, despite being in the US for more than 50 years, were disappointed that he was marrying, and I quote, "an American girl."



Upon Fred's retirement, his son John and daughter

Renee both learned how to be insurance brokers... Fred had no business, per se, to give them, and neither ever worked alongside Fred during his career, nevertheless, he seemed to have handed down the human capital necessary for them to continue on as middleman minorities in New York City. During last two decades of Fred's lifetime, his son and daughter built a large, successful insurance brokerage. After selling that business, Fred's son and grandson, (my father and oldest brother) built another successful insurance brokerage from the ground up. And so it was that the human capital was handed down again.

With the financial support of my father, Fred and Josephine (my grandmother) enjoyed retirement by spending the winter months in Miami, and summers in the Pocono mountains of Pennsylvania, where other Lebanese families from Bay Ridge, Brooklyn spent their summers. When he was 91 (or 92 or 93, who really knows), Fred passed away. The year was 1985. It was the same year that a little boy named Arturo Rubio was born on an old, dried up cattle ranch, outside the village of El Capulin, Mexico.



Fred Malhame
1892 - 1985



Arturo Rubio
1985 -

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