

Gingrich Says the Right Thing! Film at 11

The New York Times Blogs

(The Loyal Opposition)

November 23, 2011 Wednesday

Copyright 2011 The News York Times Company All **Rights** Reserved

Section: OPINION

Length: 475 words

Byline: ANDREW ROSENTHAL

Highlight: Newt **Gingrich**'s take on immigration is almost exactly **right**.

Body

Two more people got voted off the X-factor last night. And for those who were not watching that, on a nearby channel, no one got voted off the latest in a grueling series of debates among the contenders for the Republican nomination. There were so many strange, out of touch, and downright dangerous **things said** in the area of national security that it was tempting to write all about them.

Instead, I thought I'd praise Newt **Gingrich**. There is not much Mr. **Gingrich says** that I agree with, starting with the idea that he's qualified to be president. But he had it **right** - actually almost exactly **right** - when he talked about immigration.

Wolf Blitzer, who was moderating, pointed out that in the 80's, Mr. **Gingrich** voted for the Simpson-Mazzoli Act, which provided a pathway to citizenship for illegal immigrants. Mr. **Gingrich** acknowledged that he had, but pointed out that the rest of the bill, a guest worker program and better border enforcement, never came to pass.

I was half expecting Mr. **Gingrich** to **say** that he had been wrong, that we should line all of our borders with razor wire and deport anyone who even looks like an illegal immigrant. But he did not. He **said**, in fact, that there should be a pathway to legalization for people who came here illegally but put down roots, paid taxes and obeyed the law.

"I do not believe that the people of the United States are going to take people who have been here a quarter century, who have children and grandchildren, who are members of the community, who may have done something 25 years ago, separate them from their families, and expel them," he **said**.

Mr. **Gingrich**, of course, was immediately attacked by most of the other GOP contenders. They mostly tossed out the usual straw man - he was calling for amnesty. (This is **one of my favorite political tricks**, by the way.)

Mr. **Gingrich** also **said** some rather odd **things**, like he seemed to rule out illegal immigrants actually becoming full-fledged citizens. And he kept throwing "belong to a local church" in to his list of qualifications to be a welcome resident. Legalization without possible citizenship is just another dead-end idea. And being a member of a church, local or otherwise, should never be a litmus test for any government benefit.

Does **saying** nice **things** about immigrants improve Mr. **Gingrich**'s already weak chance of becoming the Republican nominee? If he actually got into the White House, would the **right**-wingers who helped him get there ever allow him to pursue real immigration reform? The answer to both is obviously, no.

But it was good to hear him embrace a position that was, after all, fairly mainstream for Republicans only a few years ago, before the hard **right** took over its agenda.

Gingrich Says the Right Thing! Film at 11

- [Moderator for a Day](#)
- [Questions for the Candidates](#)
- [Facebook Chat Redux](#)
- [Mitt Romney's First TV Ad](#)
- [How to Attack Your Opponent for *Things He Didn't Do*](#)

Classification

Language: ENGLISH

Document-Type: News

Publication-Type: Web Blog

Subject: IMMIGRATION (90%); ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS (90%); CITIZENSHIP (90%); CHILDREN (89%); US PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES 2012 (78%); POLITICAL PARTIES (78%); POLITICAL CANDIDATES (77%); BORDER CONTROL (76%); TERRITORIAL & NATIONAL BORDERS (75%); NATIONAL SECURITY (71%); FOREIGN LABOR (69%); GRANDCHILDREN (68%); RELIGION (60%)

Person: NEWT **GINGRICH** (79%); **Gingrich**, Newt

Geographic: UNITED STATES (79%)

Load-Date: November 23, 2011

End of Document