

## **BUSINESS IN THE 'BURBS:**

### **In the Atlanta area, capitalism is reborn**

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## **Body**

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The federal government should not be too quick to round up and deport illegal aliens who are willing to work an honest day's job, as the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service did last week in Fayette County.

We need those workers. The jobs immigrants take are, for the most part, those that Americans abandoned. It's the scorned work in the service, landscaping and construction industries that they cheerfully perform.

Native-born children have been done a terrible disservice; our casual demeaning of "hamburger flipping" jobs has created a mind-set that entry-level service jobs are undignified and undesirable. A generation has come to believe that a middle-class standard of living is a birthright and somebody is obligated to deliver every American a stimulating, challenging and well-paying position in the workplace. If not, we'll sue.

Immigrants, legal and otherwise, are the true entrepreneurs extant in America. The term "entrepreneur" has become a cliché; virtually no meaning is left in the word. Yet in Smyrna, one of the Hispanic population centers of metropolitan Atlanta, there's marvelous evidence all about of entrepreneurial business development. Within five years, 10 at the most, a virtually self-sustaining ethnic business community has emerged ---almost entirely based on work, self-reliance and individual entrepreneurship. Every day there is new evidence of free enterprise finding a niche.

The latest businesses to spring up are taxi services. Not more than a decade ago, Hispanics came to the Smyrna area as laborers working menial jobs. Within walking distance of the apartment complexes where they congregated, services sprang up. A Hispanic barber with a mirror, barber tools and a straight-back kitchen chair would, for example, rent space at a flea market to cut the hair of fellow workers. Others would sell ethnic foods from a supply that could be packed away in storage boxes.

Before long, without any government assistance whatsoever, that early burst of capitalism has flourished, and continues to grow.

As the Hispanic business community spreads, taxi services such as Pronto Taxi have sprung up to serve a community need. It is a marvel to watch.

Pronto was started in October by Carlos Ovalle and three of his friends because they saw a need. Ovalle came from Guatamala to Marietta in 1982, taking a job as a taxi driver. "The Hispanic population in Cobb County has grown tremendously in the last two or three years; it is a booming business opportunity," he says of the taxi service.

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After getting the financing and permits, Pronto got on the road with four cars Nov. 7. Now, just over a month later, it has seven. "We are trying to provide prompt service and bilingual drivers" to a ridership that is about 90 percent Hispanics of Mexican descent, he says.

Illegal aliens such as the 71 caught at the Fayette Community Hospital construction site should, I know, be deported. Otherwise, economic refugees from throughout Latin America would be drawn to jobs here.

But I welcome enthusiastically the legal immigrants and secretly, I must admit, I pull for the ones fleeing INS. I see far more evidence that they have been good for our communities than that they burden social services. They're family-centered. They work. They bring economic life to declining **business** districts. They work themselves rapidly up the economic ladder, as Carlos Ovalle did, and they do it without relying on government.

Jim Wooten is the Journal's editorial page editor. His column runs on Wednesday, Friday and Sunday.

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