

## **INTERNATIONAL ATLANTA;**

### **The quality and quantity of immigration**

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**Byline:** David Amato

### **Body**

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Regardless of political and economic ups and downs, the United States is still the proverbial land of milk and honey, fulfilling more of the people's needs than ever before. And thanks to international communication, the United States' reputation as a producer of everything in abundance is well-known throughout the world.

Meanwhile, the gap between the developed and developing world steadily grows, which encourages more and more emigration to the United States.

The resulting loss of human resources is a problem for our next-door neighbor, Mexico, and for the United States, which has to accommodate new immigrants. As an employee of the U.S. Foreign Service, I spent 42 years in Latin America, closely observing this phenomenon. Now, it seems the United States has the advantage.

Not all immigrants from Mexico are unskilled workers. Having little command of English, they sometimes find it difficult to prove their skills and capacities when trying to cross the border, poorly dressed and looking like common laborers. But those with training and professional expertise represent a brain drain for Mexico: That country loses public and private-sector investments in the human resources necessary to achieve enough progress to discourage emigration.

On the U.S. end, if immigration must be controlled, quality - not quantity - should be the determining factor. Instead of building fences at the border, we should have people there to test the incoming immigrants. Decisions on whether to allow them to stay should be based on whether they have something to contribute.

With their longstanding devotion and dedication to human rights, the American people must not forget that more than 200 years of immigration have blessed the United States with talented manpower, helping the nation become what it is today.

The ongoing, hell-bent national debates on the evils of immigration are inconsistent with the moral significance of America's world-famous symbol, the Statue of Liberty. I saw this unforgettable symbol for the first time in 1921, upon entering New York harbor. Like millions of immigrants, I have loved this great land and its values of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The intellectual capacity of the American people may allow occasional outbursts against immigration. But the capacity of the United States to absorb quality human resources in its growing economy must also be considered.

An estimated 200,000 Hispanics, of which 85,000 are Mexican- Americans, have participated in the development of Georgia's growing democratization and contributed to this state's pluralism. The good examples of immigration need to be more widely known.

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David Amato, 82, a native of Jerusalem, came to **Atlanta** with his family when he was 10 years old. He began working for the federal government during the Franklin Roosevelt administration. Now retired in **Atlanta**, Amato is a weekly columnist for two Mexico City newspapers.

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