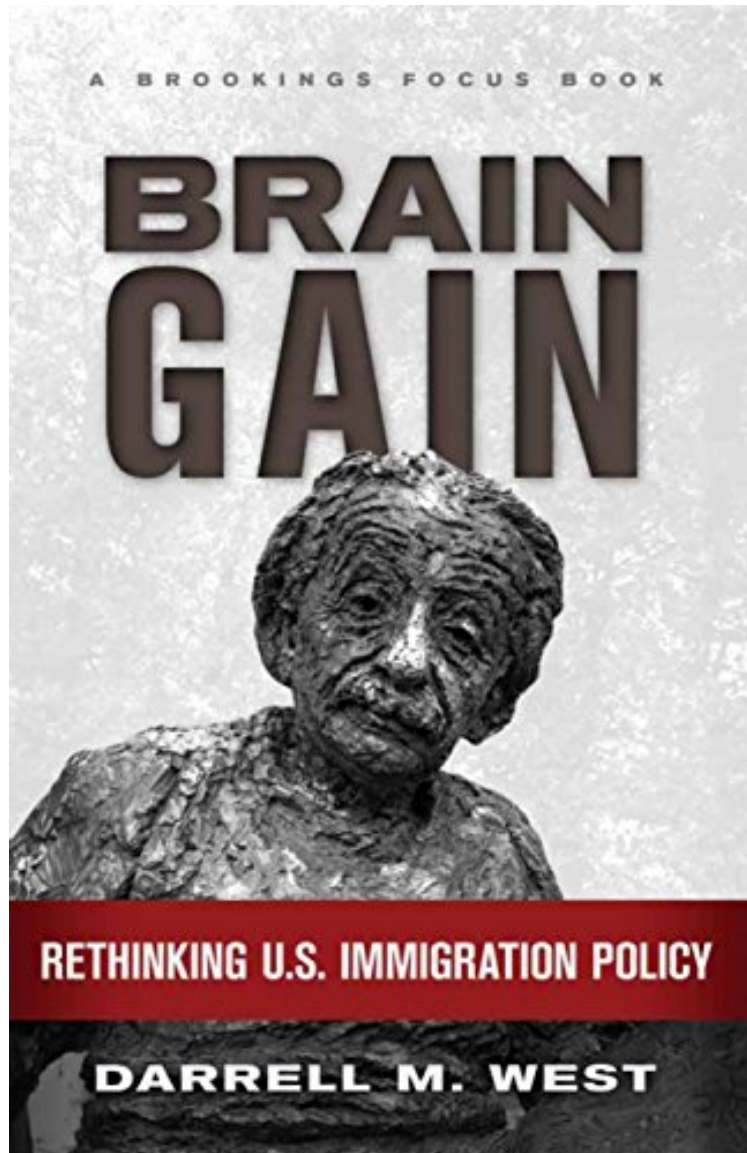


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## Brain Gain: Rethinking U.S. Immigration Policy (Brookings FOCUS Book)

*Darrell M. West*

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**Darrell M. West : Brain Gain: Rethinking U.S. Immigration Policy (Brookings FOCUS Book)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Brain Gain: Rethinking U.S. Immigration Policy (Brookings FOCUS Book):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. IMMIGRATION REFORMBy Edward GilbertThe author does an excellent job describing the problems with our current immigration policies and suggests reforms that will improve the

overall system for a better America. This is a book that every thoughtful citizen interested in fixing our broken immigration system should read. 4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Interesting and Informative -By Loyd Eskildson Most books on U.S. immigration policy are filled with seriously biased material from either the left or the right. Darrell West's "Brain Gain" does the best job avoiding those traps that I'm aware of. He believes U.S. immigration policy went seriously off course in 1965 when legislation was passed making family unification the prime factor in our immigration policy. West believes this costs us opportunities to find the next Albert Einstein, Andrew Grove (Intel co-founder), Sergey Brin (Google co-founder), Pierre Omidyar (eBay founder), Jerry Yang (Yahoo founder), etc. Brain Gain covers why past reform efforts have failed, and provides suggestions for future efforts, as well as providing important statistics. Only 2-3% of our immigrants come here through temporary work or tourism visas - that proportion includes 65,000 for high-skilled workers (H-1B) and another 66,000 seasonal workers in agriculture, construction, or tourism (H-2A, H-2B). They're allowed to stay for up to three years. About one-third of all immigrants are illegal (12 million), with 97% coming from Mexico. Another 75% of their children (4 million) are born in the U.S. and therefore U.S. citizens - complicating matters considerably whenever their parents are caught and sent back to Mexico. Only about 1% of illegals receive cash benefits, per West, using false documents; this compares well with the approximately 5% of native-born recipients. (West's data, however, would be skewed in favor of illegal immigrants by the participation of their 'anchor babies' in welfare programs.) Of course, illegals and their progeny are major recipients of both education and health care services - especially since they generally require ESL training and have a considerably higher birth rate. As for taxes, West contends that between 50-67% of illegals pay income taxes, while all pay sales and property (incorporated in rent) taxes. Finally, on wages, West reports studies have concluded that illegals have only created a 1.1% decline in wages for those with limited education. Only 17% of American businesses use e-verify - West states some employers "do not want to know the nationality status of their workers because they prefer to use low-paid employees who receive few, if any health or pension benefits." This directly contradicts his assertion that illegals only create a 1.1% decline in wages - no sane businessperson is going to hire potentially illegal workers, risking fines and disruption in the event of an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raid, as well as the problems associated with limited/no English-language capability workers. My guess is that their impact on wages is close to a one-third decrease for those affected. Regardless, employment raids create public-relations disasters for ICE because of the resulting separated families; West also asserts that employer sanctions are few and mild. Only 5,208 illegals were picked up at work sites in 2008. On the other hand, a pilot program found that about 10% of U.S. prisoners, when checked, were found to be illegals; an across-the-board focus on deporting them would greatly increase the number of prisoners sent back to Mexico - only 117,000 in 2008. Continuing, West cites a study that found about 25% of tech/engineering businesses started in the U.S. from 1995-2005 had a foreign-born founder. Within Silicon Valley, the proportion rises to 52%. Another study also reports that 24% of 2006 international patents filed in the U.S. were based on the work of foreign-born within the U.S. About 38% of Korean students earn degrees in science and/or engineering, 33% of Germans, 27% of English, 26% of Japanese, and only 16% of Americans. Thus, we need those foreign-born scientists and engineers. The 'bad news,' per West, is that nearly two-thirds of all visas are now issued on the basis of family ties, and the law even allows aunts, uncles, cousins, and adult children to use 'family unification' as their justification for entry. Of the 1.1 million legal immigrants in 2008, 64% were family sponsored, 15% employment based, and 19% refugee/asylum. Since the 1965 'reform,' the mix has changed towards Hispanics, Asians, and Africans, away from Europeans. (West provides no word on the likely future impact of Mexico's drug wars and the numbers seeking asylum within the U.S.) The author points out that economic purposes dominate Canada's immigration policy - 58% enter that nation under provisions aimed at improving its economy, vs. only 6.5% in the U.S. West's recommendations include using immigration policy to help improve our economy by expanding the 'O-1' program that provides visas for those with extraordinary abilities in arts, education, business, science, or sports - only 9,000 in 2008. He'd also like to expand the EB-5 visa that allows those investing \$500,000 in designated 'distressed' areas, and of course the H-1B program. Systematically combing our jails and prisons for illegals to deport, as well as requiring verification of one's legal ability to work in the U.S. prior to employment are also recommended. Bottom-Line: "Brain Gain" provides a good structure for reforming our immigration system. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Tightly Packed With Factual Information By David Weinstein The narrative of Brain Gain keeps readers off-guard as they try to categorize it as either sympathetic to the immigrants or supportive of the natives. It keeps tracking leftward, then rightward, as it follows the facts rather than marshalling them for its own agenda. This is the nature of honest deliberation and a credit to Brookings Institute. Some of the most important findings are that Congress, which has to mean the Republicans in Congress, fails to come close to adequately funding the administrative bureaucracy that is necessary for enforcing immigration policy. So few judges are appointed to handle the huge numbers of cases, subsequent to arrest, that many decisions are not at all well-informed. So few immigration agents are assigned to track overstayed visa cases that the number of visitors who overstay visas is comparable to those who come through the nation's porous borders. It could be interesting to immigration scholars that the book does open with a broad picture that is somewhat inaccurate. There are a number of outright factual errors that scholars can detect, which have to make its information somewhat suspect. This runs like a

trivia game to others, though...."Today, around 13 percent of immigrants are first-generation arrivals, while 11 percent are American-born children of immigrants." (3) But every person born in America is a native and a citizen, not an immigrant. West means that around 13 percent of Americans are immigrants and another 11 percent of Americans are American-born children of immigrants. He just needs a better editor."These initial migrations [in the 17th and 18th centuries] gave us our language and people with experience in farming, business, and trade. The Germans arrived in the 1840s and 1850s, seeking land and fortune in the Midwestern part of the country. " (3) Setting aside the faulty capitalization, which, along with generally faulty punctuation and typos, mars the great read, this line about the Germans is a gross generalization. Many Germans settled in eastern seaboard cities like New York City. Many had technical and entrepreneurial skills fit for urban life. They opened businesses in areas such as food importation, saloons, and work in urban crafts like cigar-making. Refer to the great work on antebellum immigration, *Immigrant Life in New York City* by Robert Ernst. It is not demeaning at all, just a generalization, the stereotype, something like saying that Jews, a subset of the Germans, came to work as doctors and lawyers. The next line is: " They were followed by Russians, Irish, and Italians in subsequent decades." (3e) The Irish came in larger numbers and in a much larger proportion to the homeland population than the Germans during the 1830s and 40s. Refer to *Mass Migration Under Sail* by Raymond Cohn. It is not that the thesis of *Brain Gain* depends on getting these facts straight, but that its facts can be called into question. Anyway, *Brain Gain* is confirmed for its findings about present-day high-skilled immigration, that a 2007 study by the University of California at Berkeley School of Information does say, " that 25.3 percent of the technology and engineering businesses launched in the United States between 1995 and 2005 had a foreign-born founder." (14) *Let Them In* by Jason L. Riley, p. 64, line 13 appears to unintentionally limit a similar finding in the earlier edition of the study to only venture-backed businesses....These criticisms are presented only to add something. *Brain Gain* is actually a fact-packed, informative, non-judgmental read, and, despite its odd cover, should exert influence on public policy.

Many of America's greatest artists, scientists, investors, educators, and entrepreneurs have come from abroad. Rather than suffering from the "brain drain" of talented and educated individuals emigrating, the United States has benefited greatly over the years from the "brain gain" of immigration. These gifted immigrants have engineered advances in energy, information technology, international commerce, sports, arts, and culture. To stay competitive, the United States must institute more of an open-door policy to attract unique talents from other nations. Yet Americans resist such a policy despite their own immigrant histories and the substantial social, economic, intellectual, and cultural benefits of welcoming newcomers. Why? In *Brain Gain*, Darrell West asserts that perception or "vision" is one reason reform in immigration policy is so politically difficult. Public discourse tends to emphasize the perceived negatives. Fear too often trumps optimism and reason. And democracy is messy, with policy principles that are often difficult to reconcile. The seeming irrationality of U.S. immigration policy arises from a variety of thorny and interrelated factors: particularistic politics and fragmented institutions, public concern regarding education and employment, anger over taxes and social services, and ambivalence about national identity, culture, and language. Add to that stew a myopic (or worse) press, persistent fears of terrorism, and the difficulties of implementing border enforcement and legal justice. West prescribes a series of reforms that will put America on a better course and enhance its long-term social and economic prosperity. Reconceptualizing immigration as a way to enhance innovation and competitiveness, the author notes, will help us find the next Sergey Brin, the next Andrew Grove, or even the next Albert Einstein.