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IMMIGRATION MYTHS AND CABLE NEWS

A MEDIA MATTERS ACTION NETWORK REPORT - MAY 21, 2008

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

There are many problems facing the United States today: a faltering economy, a health-care crisis, and the continuing war in Iraq, to name a few. But viewers of some of the most prominent cable news programs are presented a different reality, one in which one issue stands above all others: illegal immigration.

Media Matters Action Network undertook this study in order to document the rhetoric surrounding immigration that is heard on cable news. When it comes to this issue, cable news overflows not just with vitriol, but also with a series of myths that feed viewers' resentment and fears, seemingly geared toward creating anti-immigrant hysteria.

There are two types of myths we discuss in this report. The first type is the large and most common myths, about crime and undocumented immigrants, and the costs of illegal immigration in social services and taxes. These topics are complex, and there are sometimes legitimate points buried within the arguments immigration opponents make. The second type of myth is the urban legend: that there is a conspiracy to take back the Southwest United States for Mexico; that there is a secret plan to construct a "NAFTA Superhighway" running from Canada to Mexico; that the U.S. is well on its way to surrendering its sovereignty to a "North American Union" (NAU); that Mexican immigrants are infecting Americans with leprosy; and that undocumented immigrants are responsible for a wave of election fraud. These myths are discussed less often, but are notable for their sheer ludicrousness. The North American Union and NAFTA Superhighway are closely related, and indeed are often discussed in tandem (the building of the Superhighway being posited as a step on the road to the creation of the NAU), but since each is also often discussed alone, we examine these two myths separately.

We focus our analysis on a trio of cable commentators: Lou Dobbs, Bill O'Reilly, and Glenn Beck. While hosts on other cable programs regularly discuss illegal immigration (particularly on Fox News, where it is a frequent topic on *Hannity & Colmes* and *Special Report with Brit Hume*), these three are the most notable for a number of reasons. On their eponymous programs, Dobbs, O'Reilly, and Beck serve up a steady diet of fear, anger, and resentment on the topic of illegal immigration.

Dobbs is the one most obsessed with the topic; indeed, instead of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, his program

might be more properly called *Lou Dobbs Crusades Against Illegal Immigration Tonight*. Fully 70 percent of the 2007 episodes of *Lou Dobbs Tonight* contained discussion of illegal immigration. *The O'Reilly Factor* is not far behind; 56 percent of 2007 episodes discussed illegal immigration. And though *Glenn Beck* was less consumed with the issue (28 percent of his 2007 programs discussed it), his show is the one on which viewers often find the most inflammatory claims.

Among the study's findings:

- During 2007, the alleged connection between illegal immigration and crime was discussed on 94 episodes of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, 66 episodes of *The O'Reilly Factor*, and 29 episodes of *Glenn Beck*.
- During 2007, the allegation that undocumented immigrants drain social services and/or don't pay taxes was discussed on 71 episodes of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, 13 episodes of *Glenn Beck*, and eight episodes of *The O'Reilly Factor*.
- Dobbs and Beck have perpetuated two related myths, that there are plans to construct a "NAFTA Superhighway" running from Mexico to Canada, and that there are plans to join Mexico, Canada, and the United States in a "North American Union" similar to the European Union. Dobbs has discussed the fictional North American Union on 56 separate programs during the past two years. (These two myths were also given a boost by Republican presidential candidate Ron Paul, who pushed the ideas on the campaign trail.)¹
- All three programs have presented as fact the "reconquista" myth, which states that there is a movement afoot for Mexico to take over the American Southwest.
- *Lou Dobbs Tonight* has also been the show on which viewers are told about a mythical explosion of leprosy cases due to illegal immigration, and a mythical epidemic of voter fraud due to illegal immigration.

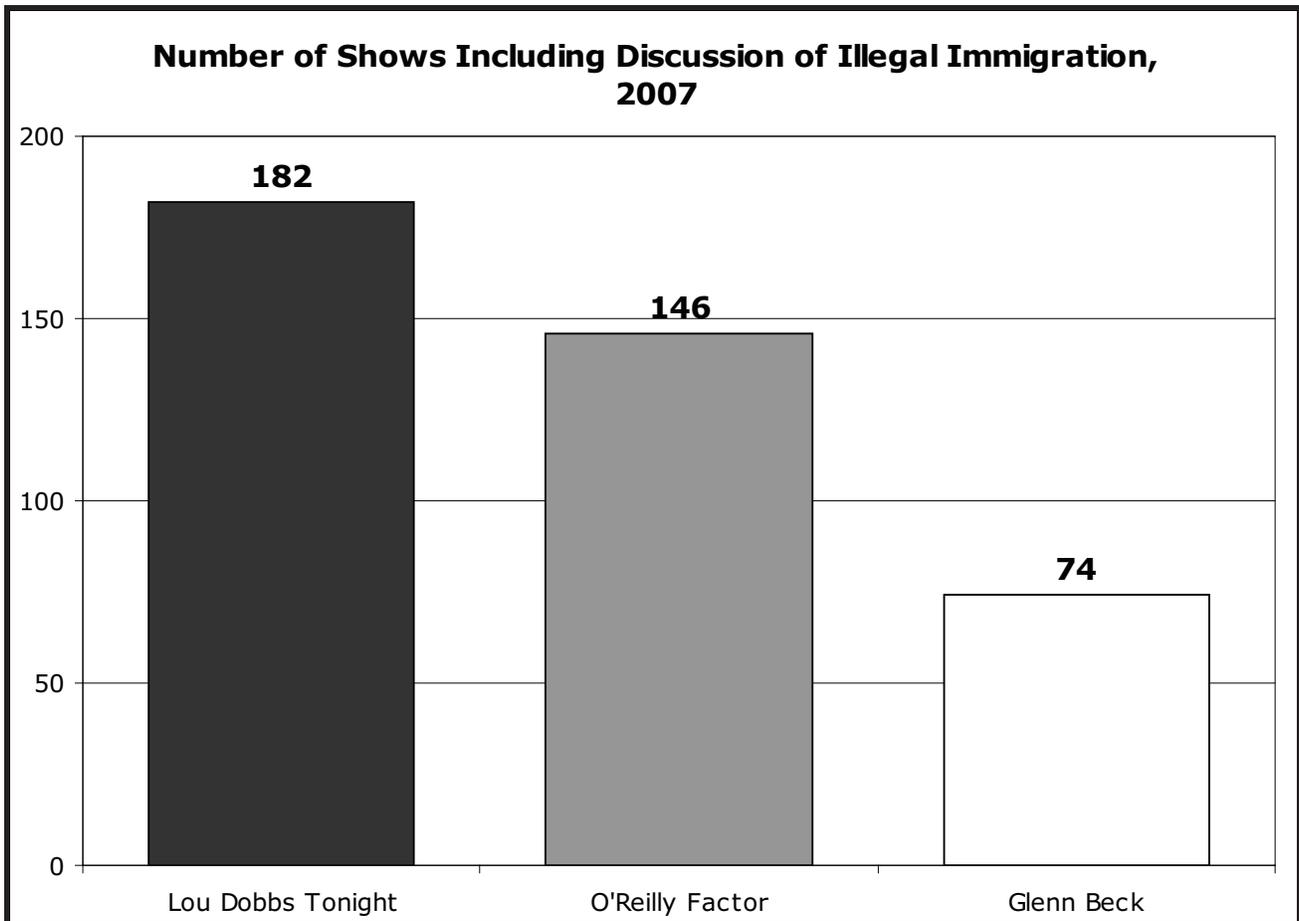
An examination of the rhetoric on immigration

¹ An article on Paul's website, written under the candidate's byline, reads, "The ultimate goal is not simply a superhighway, but an integrated North American Union -- complete with a currency, a cross-national bureaucracy, and virtually borderless travel within the Union. Like the European Union, a North American Union would represent another step toward the abolition of national sovereignty altogether." Available at <http://www.ronpaul2008.com/articles/701/the-nafta-superhighway/>.

on these programs reveals the subtle and not-so-subtle ways these myths find their way into mainstream discourse and are validated by figures like Dobbs, O'Reilly, and Beck. On some occasions, the hosts repeat a myth's key elements in explicit terms; at other times, they mention some of those elements but not others; and sometimes they bring up the catchphrases associated with those myths without elaborating. Through sheer repetition, they help propagate the myths. For instance, by airing dozens and dozens of segments on individual cases in which an undocumented immigrant committed a crime, Dobbs, O'Reilly, and Beck feed the misperception that these immigrants are responsible for a disproportionate share of crime in America, even if their comments about the specific case in question don't stray from the facts. Finally, these programs, particularly *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, have hosted some of the most radical immigration opponents, offering them a national platform to disseminate extremist views.

they are a critical link in the chain that keeps anti-immigrant sentiment moving forward.

The result is that those opponents -- seeking to foster misunderstanding about immigration and promoting views often tinged with hate -- gain critical assistance from cable news. Though on any given night Dobbs or O'Reilly may not repeat the most egregious deceptions of the nativist right,



DOBBS, O'REILLY, BECK, AND THE BIG MYTHS

• CRIME

The Myth: *There is an "illegal alien crime wave" sweeping the country.*

The Truth: There is no evidence to indicate that undocumented immigrants are more likely to commit crimes than American citizens; indeed, the evidence strongly suggests that immigrants in general are *less* likely to commit crimes.² For instance, a 2005 [study](#)³ conducted by researchers from Harvard University and the University of Michigan revealed both that immigrants committed fewer crimes than native-born citizens, and that a greater proportion of immigrants in a neighborhood was associated with lower rates of crime. Another [study](#)⁴ analyzing census data found that among men aged 18-39 (who make up the bulk of those committing crimes), the incarceration rate was five times higher for the native-born than for the foreign-born. This held true within ethnic and national-origin groups, meaning, for instance, that native-born Latinos were more likely to be incarcerated than foreign-born Latinos. A recent study by the Public Policy Institute of California found that in that state, which contains more immigrants than any other, the foreign-born are incarcerated at a rate half as high as their presence in the population, and only one-tenth as high among men age 18-40, who make up the bulk of prisoners.⁵ Robert J. Sampson, chairman of the sociology department at Harvard University, said

2 Note that since virtually none of the data gathered either by academics or the government (for instance, the U.S. Census) is able to distinguish between documented and undocumented immigrants, the evidence in this area -- including that cited by both immigration advocates and opponents -- usually applies to immigrants generally.

3 Robert Sampson, et al., "Social Anatomy of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Violence," *American Journal of Public Health*, February 2005, pp. 224-232. Available at http://www.wjh.harvard.edu/soc/faculty/sampson/articles/2005_AJPH.pdf.

4 "The Myth of Immigrant Criminality and the Paradox of Assimilation: Incarceration Rates among Native and Foreign-Born Men," Immigration Policy Center, Spring 2007. Available at http://www.aifl.org/ipc/special_report/sr_022107.pdf. For a discussion of the relationship between immigration and crime, see Eyal Press, "Do Immigrants Make Us Safer?" *The New York Times Magazine*, December 3, 2006. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/03/magazine/03wwln_idealab.html?ei=5088&en=ae6ad6a5d976ee2&ex=1322802000&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss&pagewanted=all..

5 Public Policy Institute of California, "Crime, Corrections, and California," February 2008. Available at http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/cacounts/CC_208KBCC.pdf. The latter statistic (one-tenth as high among men age 18-40) includes all institutions related to criminal activity, including prisons, jails, and halfway houses.

that data show that undocumented immigrants are in fact "disproportionately less likely to be involved in many acts of deviance, crime, drunk driving, any number of things that sort of imperil our well-being."⁶

There have, of course, been individual crimes committed by undocumented immigrants, some of which are quite serious. But in order to justify a particular focus in news programs and the claims of a "crime wave" -- not just a few reports, but the enormous number of stories and discussions we document below -- crimes committed by undocumented immigrants would have to be disproportionate to their numbers. Immigration opponents might argue that any crime committed by an immigrant increases the total amount of crime in the country, but the risk of crime is increased only if the immigrants commit more crimes per person than the native-born, since immigration also increases the population and therefore diffuses the crime risk to any particular person.

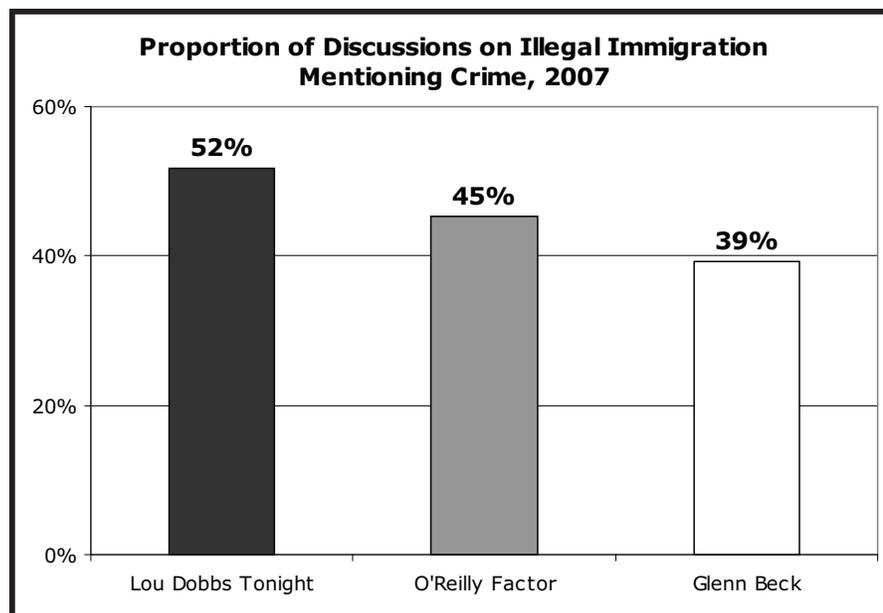
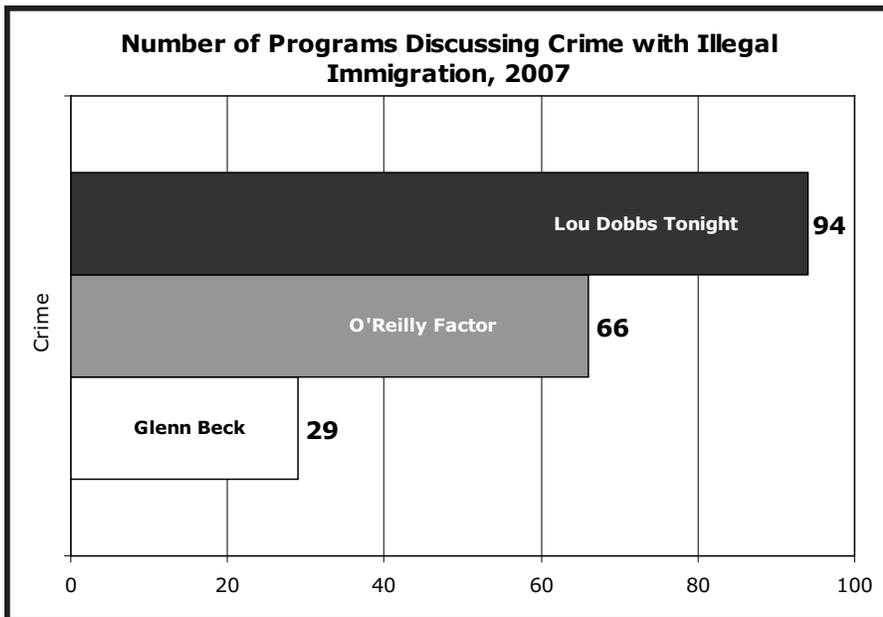
Immigration opponents often note that a relatively high proportion of *federal* prisoners are foreign-born (more than a quarter are noncitizens, according to the Government Accountability Office⁷). But this one statistic gives a misleading impression of overall crime. For one, federal prisoners account for only a small proportion -- less than 10 percent -- of the total incarcerated population, since most prisoners are housed in state and local facilities.⁸ According to the latest Justice Department statistics available, noncitizen prisoners accounted for only 5.9 percent of the combined federal and state prisoner population.⁹ The most recent Census Bureau [report](#) on the foreign-born population in the U.S. found that 11.7 percent of the population is foreign-born -- meaning that the proportion of foreign-born

6 Alex Koppelman, "Memo to Bill O'Reilly: More immigrants equals less crime," Salon, April 10, 2007. Available at <http://www.salon.com/news/feature/2007/04/10/geraldo/print.html>.

7 GAO-05-337R, "Information on Criminal Aliens Incarcerated in Federal and State Prisons and Local Jails," April 7, 2005. Available at: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05337r.pdf>.

8 According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, at the end of 2006, there were 2.26 million inmates in custody in state and federal prisons and in local jails, of which 190,844, or 8.4 percent, were in federal prisons. See table, "Inmates in custody in State or Federal prisons or in local jails at yearend 2006," in "Prisoners in 2006," Bureau of Justice Statistics, December 2007. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/p06.pdf>.

9 "Prison and Jail Inmates at Midyear 2006," Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, June 2007. Available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/pjim06.pdf>. According to the report, in the 12-month period ending June 30, 2006, there were 1,556,518 federal and state prisoners, of which 91,426, or 5.87 percent were noncitizens. Figures on noncitizens were not included in the year-end report.



and immigration.

On any given weeknight, there is a better-than-even chance that on one of these three programs, someone is discussing illegal immigration and crime. Although Dobbs discusses immigration more often than O'Reilly, who in turn discusses it more often than Beck, each of them brings up crime a substantial portion of the time when they do discuss immigration.

So what do they talk about when they talk about crime? While sweeping claims are sometimes made -- for instance, Dobbs has said, inaccurately, that "just about a third of the prison population in this country is estimated to be illegal aliens"¹¹ -- more often the focus is on specific crimes or specific places where undocumented immigrants are purportedly committing large numbers of crimes. Dobbs in particular airs story after story on communities where there is a new effort to crack down on undocumented immigrants or a high-profile crime has been committed. Dobbs consistently criticizes the federal government for "ignoring the plight of states overwhelmed by criminal illegal aliens."¹²

Crimes committed by undocumented immigrants are also linked to other purported ill effects of illegal immigration. When a Houston police officer was murdered by an undocumented immigrant, Dobbs told the city's police chief, "When we have borders that are unprotected, when criminal illegal aliens are sent across the border, deported and are returning and then murdering police officers. You're talking about an unfunded mandate. And that unfunded mandate is laying straight forwardly on the taxpayers' back in this

prisoners is much lower than the proportion of foreign-born people in the population.¹⁰

The Issue According to Dobbs, O'Reilly, and Beck: While cable commentators talk about many issues with regard to immigration -- effects on employment, on taxes, or on social services -- none is as inflammatory as crime, with its ability to stir up fear and anger. And while crime in general lends itself to sensationalistic news coverage, the combination of crime and immigration is obviously too good to pass up for some on the cable dial. Simply put, the three programs on which we focused, particularly *Lou Dobbs Tonight* and *The O'Reilly Factor*, are awash in discussions of crime

¹⁰ "The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2003," U.S. Census Bureau, August 2004. Available at <http://www.census.gov/prod/2004pubs/p20-551.pdf>.

¹¹ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, October 5, 2006. On the December 4, 2007, edition of *Democracy Now!*, a daily TV and radio news program, Dobbs admitted that he "misspoke" and acknowledged that the number he was referring to was "26% in federal prisons." When pressed by host Amy Goodman about whether he corrected the misstatement on his show, Dobbs said, "I'm sure we have." Goodman pointed out that she could not find the correction. *Media Matters* could not find a correction of Dobbs' statement either.

¹² *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, March 8, 2007.

country, U.S. citizens who are paying for it all, the high cost of medical care, social services, crime prevention and prosecution, of course as well."¹³ Local officials angry about immigration get a sympathetic airing from Dobbs, who describes their complaints thusly: "The chief of police in the small town under siege by the pro-illegal alien open borders lobby says his community is being overrun by criminal illegal aliens and drug gangs."¹⁴

Dobbs' correspondents, including Casey Wian, Bill Tucker, and frequent guest-host Kitty Pilgrim, serve up a steady diet of stories on "fed up" Americans facing off against a federal government indifferent to the plight of communities overrun with "criminal illegal aliens." The Dobbs atmosphere may be best described by a poll question Dobbs posed in September: "Are you outraged that the federal government is releasing tens of thousands of criminal illegal aliens onto U.S. streets instead of deporting them?"¹⁵

For his part, Bill O'Reilly will often take a story of a specific crime and treat it as though it were a matter of national urgency. For example, he devoted segments on 13 separate programs to discussion of a case in Virginia Beach in which a drunken driver, who happened to be an undocumented immigrant, killed two young women in a traffic accident. As tragic as these deaths were, drunken drivers kill dozens of people every day; [according](#) to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 16,885 fatalities in alcohol-related auto crashes in 2005.¹⁶

O'Reilly was hardly on a crusade against drunken driving; his interest was in the fact that in this case, the driver was an undocumented immigrant.¹⁷ O'Reilly brushes aside arguments that such cases are unrepresentative -- and even makes attempts to link immigration to terrorism. "If the local authorities, and they should be part of homeland security, were to be more vigilant on criminal illegal aliens, notice the word criminal, and track them harder, the Fort Dix thing [a thwarted plot to kill U.S. soldiers] would have been caught sooner," he said in June. "The deaths of the Virginia Beach thing which we talked about. And all of

these guys at 9-11 were stopped by local police."¹⁸ When O'Reilly is unavailable, his compatriots will pick up the slack. "The never-ending criminal alien revolving door," said guest host and conservative columnist Michelle Malkin last August. "Another heinous crime, another illegal alien suspect with a mile-long rap sheet, another bloody tragedy wrought by open borders."¹⁹ O'Reilly also uses the immigration issue to bash "the left": "The most extreme elements in this country want open borders, blanket amnesty, and entitlement for foreign nationals who have come here illegally, and generally want to change the demographics in the USA so political power can be assumed by the left," he said last October. "That is the end game."²⁰

As on many issues, when it comes to immigration and crime, Glenn Beck can be counted on to take individual cases and use them to make inflammatory claims and sensationalistic fear-mongering. "It's time we wake up in this country," he said last year. "We are dealing with an illegal alien crime wave, and drug smuggling is just the beginning."²¹ In November, Beck aired a special called "Border Crisis," which he introduced this way: "America's border crisis. Rape, drugs, kidnapping, even murder. It is beginning to look a lot more like a border war."²² Beck also often repeats that by virtue of his or her immigration status, "Every single illegal immigrant is guilty of a crime, every single one."²³ As he put it in September, "Every undocumented worker is an illegal immigrant, a criminal and a drain on our dwindling resources."²⁴

• Social Services and Taxes

The Myth: *Undocumented immigrants consume a disproportionate amount of social services and don't pay taxes, thereby constituting a drain on American society.*

The Truth: Some believe that undocumented immigrants benefit from federal programs such as food stamps, Medicaid, SCHIP, and welfare. In fact, undocumented immigrants are ineligible to receive these benefits; anyone seeking to obtain

13 *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, October 5, 2006.

14 *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, March 20, 2007.

15 *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, September 13, 2007.

16 "Impaired Driving," Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncipc/factsheets/driving.htm>.

17 During 2007, the only times O'Reilly brought up drunken driving in a context other than illegal immigration was when he played a dramatic 911 call of a girl calling from a car, begging her drunken father to slow down, and some discussion of Lindsay Lohan's drunken driving arrest.

18 *The O'Reilly Factor*, June 14, 2007.

19 *The O'Reilly Factor*, August 10, 2007.

20 *The O'Reilly Factor*, October 30, 2007.

21 *Glenn Beck*, January 12, 2007.

22 *Glenn Beck*, November 8, 2007.

23 *Glenn Beck*, April 12, 2007.

24 *Glenn Beck*, September 4, 2007.

them must provide proof of legal status.²⁵ Since the passage of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996, even *documented* immigrants are ineligible for most forms of public assistance for the first five years they reside in the United States or until they attain citizenship.²⁶ While there are some social services undocumented immigrants do use -- public education for children, for instance -- contrary to the rhetoric one hears on cable news, they also support government spending through the taxes they pay.

Undocumented immigrants pay all kinds of taxes: they pay sales taxes whenever they purchase goods and services, they pay property taxes in the form of rent, and they pay payroll and income taxes. Many undocumented immigrants use false Social Security numbers to obtain employment; when they do so, these workers then pay payroll taxes (for Social Security and Medicare), and often federal and state income taxes as well, through paycheck withholding. As the *New York Times* [reported](#) in 2005,²⁷ the Social Security Administration estimates that three-quarters of undocumented immigrants pay payroll taxes, adding as much as \$7 billion in Social Security taxes a year to federal coffers, and another \$1.5 billion in Medicare taxes.²⁸ Under current law, none of these funds will ever be paid back to undocumented immigrants in the form of Social Security and Medicare benefits, as they are not eligible.

This does not mean, however, that in the short term some states and localities will not pay more for services to undocumented immigrants than they collect in taxes, even if when all levels of government are considered, immigrants more than pay for themselves. According to a December 2007 report by the nonpartisan Congressional

25 Under federal law, hospitals that accept Medicaid are prohibited from turning away anyone requiring emergency care, regardless of their immigration status. The federal government does reimburse hospitals for a portion of what they spend on emergency care for undocumented immigrants, under a program called Federal Reimbursement of Emergency Health Services Furnished to Undocumented Aliens.

26 See the Department of Health and Human Services' explanation at <http://www.acf.dhhs.gov/programs/cse/new/prwora.htm>.

27 Eduardo Porter, "Illegal Immigrants Are Bolstering Social Security With Billions," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2005. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/04/05/business/05immigration.html>.

28 When the Social Security Administration is unable to match a worker's name and number, the wages are recorded in the SSA's Earnings Suspense File. A 2002 report from the SSA revealed that in Tax Year 2000 alone, \$49 billion was placed in this file, with the figure growing rapidly. Social Security Administration, "Status of the Social Security Administration's Earnings Suspense File," document A-03-03-23038. Available at <http://www.ssa.gov/oig/ADOBEPDF/A-03-03-23038.pdf>.

Budget Office, "Over the past two decades, most efforts to estimate the fiscal impact of immigration in the United States have concluded that, in aggregate and over the long term, tax revenues of all types generated by immigrants -- both legal and unauthorized -- exceed the cost of the services they use. Generally, such estimates include revenues and spending at the federal, state, and local levels. However, many estimates also show that the cost of providing public services to unauthorized immigrants at the state and local levels exceeds what that population pays in state and local taxes."²⁹

The Issue According to Dobbs, O'Reilly and Beck: On CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, and to a lesser degree on CNN Headline News' *Glenn Beck* and Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*, it is common to hear the myths about social services and taxes from the programs' hosts, guests, and viewers (whose emails are read on the air). Undocumented immigrants and their children are regularly described as straining social services provided at the federal or state level by receiving Social Security, health care (hospital emergency room visits),³⁰ public education, and other social services. "I also know our country is on fire, and the fuel is illegal immigration," Beck said in January 2007. "They put a strain on our Social Security, our education, our health care and, yes, national security."³¹ (Beck has linked national security with these budgetary questions a number of times; for instance, in October he said, "Not only are you and I not profiting from illegal immigration, we're losing vital social services and risking national security along the way."³²) The propagation of these myths adds up to the often implied and sometimes explicitly stated claim that immigrants are free riders who do not pay taxes while receiving a bounty of social services.

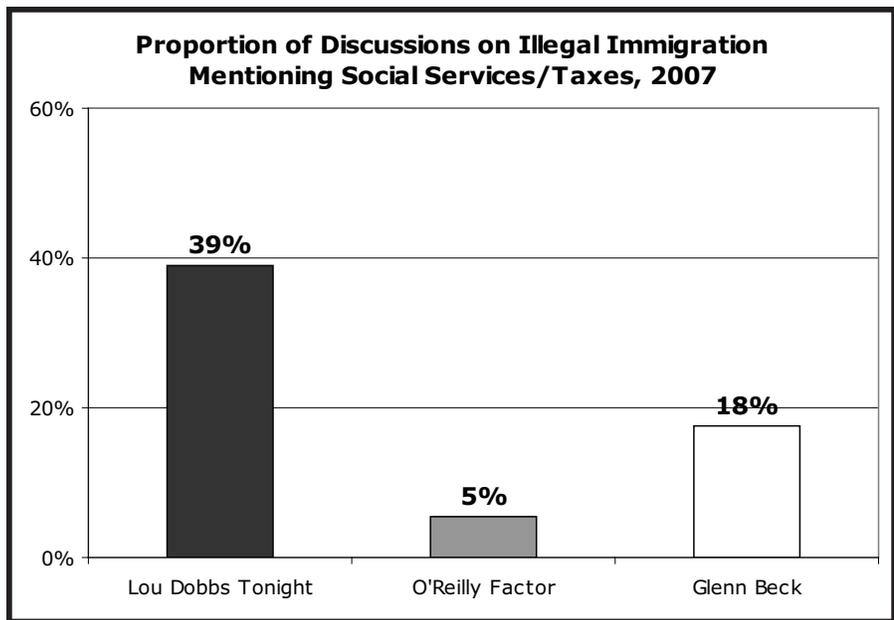
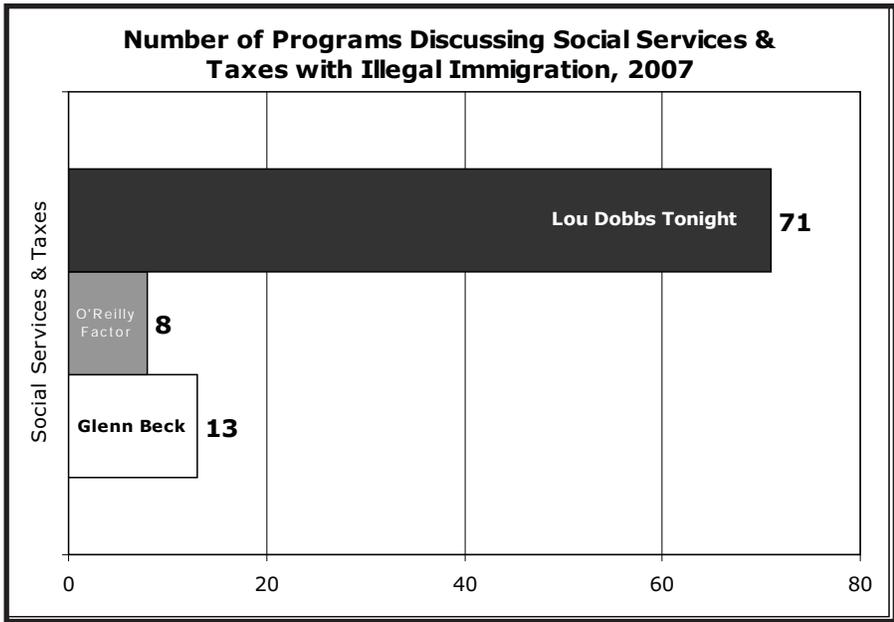
Unlike O'Reilly and Beck, Dobbs has his own stable of reporters, who are often dispatched to do stories on local officials angry about providing services to undocumented immigrants. Beck and O'Reilly often make more sweeping claims. "Unless you're a

29 Congressional Budget Office, "The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments," December 2007. Available at <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/87xx/doc8711/12-6-Immigration.pdf>.

30 While many hospitals are greatly strained by the cost of treating those without insurance, undocumented immigrants make up a small portion of the uninsured, and thus a small portion of the overall uncompensated care for which hospitals pay. See Congressional Budget Office, "The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments," December 2007. Available at <http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/87xx/doc8711/12-6-Immigration.pdf>.

31 *Glenn Beck*, January 30, 2007.

32 *Glenn Beck*, October 1, 2007.



\$19,000 to support undocumented immigrants.)³⁴ What draws undocumented immigrants, Pat Buchanan told Dobbs in December, is "basically business and the welfare, the social safety net draws them here."³⁵

Dobbs usually closes his show by reading brief viewer emails without explanation or refutation, often giving voice to the false idea that immigrants are feeding off of taxpayers without contributing anything to American society. A brief sampling:

"Bill in Ohio: 'Please remind your audience to get their taxes in early this year. There are anywhere from eleven to twenty million illegal aliens depending on them. We wouldn't want to let them down.' " (January 10, 2007)

"Don in North Carolina: 'Lou, remember the Boston Tea Party -- taxation without representation? Now representation without taxation (for illegal aliens, of course).' " (January 15, 2007)

"Carl in Wisconsin: 'Just a little reminder for the tax paying middle class, to remember to pay their taxes. Millions of illegal aliens are depending on you.' " (April 9, 2007)

"Bob in Texas said, 'Lou, what's wrong with these government models? Illegals: representation without taxation. U.S. citizens: taxation without representation.' I think you have got the essence of this situation. And Sharon in Georgia, 'Taxation without representation -- it's time for another tea party.' " (May 29, 2007)

"Jene in New Mexico: 'Thank goodness you're reporting on the Hazleton, Pennsylvania situation, where illegal aliens have more legal rights than the U.S. taxpayers, who fund much of their social wants and needs.' " (July 26, 2007)

politician in Washington, you don't really need a dope like me to tell you that illegal immigration is bad for our national security, hurts American workers, and puts a tremendous strain on our social services," Beck said in February 2007.³³ O'Reilly has argued: "Low-skilled immigrant labor costs the taxpayers today \$19,000," he said in May. "[E]ach of us pay \$19,000 to supplement people who are using the hospitals, the education system." When one of his guests, a UCLA professor, began to shake his head, O'Reilly said, "Don't shake your head. These are rock-solid stats." (In fact, O'Reilly was wildly distorting a study that was itself extremely tendentious. The study, from a conservative think tank, charged that each undocumented immigrant cost taxpayers \$19,000, not that each American taxpayer pays

Overall, *Lou Dobbs Tonight* spent the most time airing claims about immigrants draining

³³ Glenn Beck. February 28, 2007.

³⁴ *The O'Reilly Factor*. May 17, 2007. O'Reilly didn't say where he obtained his "rock-solid stats," but they appear to have come from a paper issued by the conservative Heritage Foundation and authored by Robert E. Rector and Christine Kim (available at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/Immigration/sr14.cfm>). There is insufficient space here to refute all of Rector and Kim's claims, but suffice to say that they use highly selective means of choosing what counts as a cost and what counts as a payment.

³⁵ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, December 10, 2007.

government coffers and/or not paying taxes. Out of a total of approximately 260 broadcasts, *Lou Dobbs Tonight* featured these ideas on 71 programs, or more than one out of every four broadcasts -- and 39 percent of the programs on which he discussed immigration. *Glenn Beck* repeated these ideas on 13 programs, and *The O'Reilly Factor* on eight. Thus, while the topic of immigration and social services/taxes is regularly discussed on *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, it only occasionally comes up on the other two programs, whose immigration segments are more likely to focus on crime.

• The NAFTA Superhighway

In recent years, some conservative groups have sounded the alarm over a development that they consider a growing threat to America: the construction of a "NAFTA [North American Free Trade Agreement] Superhighway" that would run from Mexico City, Mexico, to Toronto, Canada. In some tellings, the highway would be four football fields wide and allow Mexican truck drivers to travel unimpeded into the U.S. without the delays of rigorous border security checks. According to the purveyors of the theory, the highway would be a prelude to the creation of a multinational North American Union among the U.S., Canada, and Mexico that would essentially cede American sovereignty to its neighbors (see below for more on the NAU).

Rumors of a NAFTA Superhighway have circulated widely on [right-wing media outlets](#) and [websites](#) in recent years. But as many news outlets and the federal government have stated, the NAFTA Superhighway is, in fact, a myth.

In the August 27, 2007 issue of *The Nation* magazine, Christopher Hayes [traced](#) the provenance of the NAFTA Superhighway myth to North America's SuperCorridor Coalition, Inc. ([NASCO](#)), a nonprofit organization that [describes itself](#) as a coalition of "cities, counties, states, provinces and private sector representatives along the Corridor in Canada, the United States and Mexico, dedicated to maximizing the efficiency and security of their existing trade and transportation infrastructure."³⁶ NASCO a few years ago put on its website a map of the U.S. that traced the flow of NAFTA traffic from Monterrey, Mexico, through the U.S. Midwest, and to points throughout Canada. The map, which was seen by right-wing nationalists as a blueprint for a "NAFTA Superhighway," soon circulated widely on the right. As Hayes reported, "The organization soon found itself besieged with angry phone calls and letters."³⁷ (NASCO has since taken the map down from the website because "[it was causing confusion due to false and misleading information put up across the Internet.](#)")

As NASCO [explains](#) on its website, the map was not a blueprint for a NAFTA Superhighway but merely

³⁶ "About NASCO," North America's SuperCorridor Organization. Available at <http://www.splcenter.org/intel/intelreport/article.jsp?pid=978>.

³⁷ Christopher Hayes, "The NAFTA Superhighway," *The Nation*, August 27, 2007. Available at <http://www.thenation.com/doc/20070827/hayes>.

traced the route of trade traffic throughout Mexico, the U.S. and Canada. On its website, NASCO stresses that "[t]here is no new, proposed 'NAFTA Superhighway'":

"NAFTA Superhighway" is a slogan for EXISTING corridors that carry international trade with Canada and/or Mexico. NASCO and the cities, counties, states and provinces along our existing Interstate Highways 35/29/94 (the NASCO Corridor) have been referring to I-35 as the "NAFTA Superhighway" for many years as it carries a substantial amount of international trade with Mexico, the United States and Canada. There are no plans to build a new NAFTA Superhighway -- it exists today as I-35.³⁸

Hayes quoted Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Market Access and Compliance David Bohigian as saying, "There is no NAFTA Superhighway." Sen. Kit Bond (R-MO), a member of the Committee on Environment and Public Works, [said](#) that rumors of a NAFTA Superhighway were "unfounded theories" that had "no credence."³⁹

So a term that NASCO used to refer to existing trade routes was transformed into a catchphrase referring to a conspiracy to construct a new highway with sinister implications for our national sovereignty. Yet despite overwhelming evidence that the NAFTA Superhighway as a vast new construction project is simply a figment of some people's imagination, it has nonetheless received substantial coverage on cable news shows. Since January 1, 2006, the NAFTA Superhighway has been mentioned 33 times on cable news -- 32 of which were on CNN (the only other mention was on Fox). On CNN, the culprits were Lou Dobbs, who mentioned it on his show 20 times, and Glenn Beck, who mentioned it 12 times.⁴⁰

³⁸ "Myth vs. Fact," NASCO. Available at <http://www.nascocorridor.com/admin/images/docs/NASCO%20CONGRESSIONAL%20-%20Myth%20vs%20%20Fact%20December%202007.pdf>.

³⁹ Philip Dine, "Urban Legend of North American Union Feeds Fears," *Seattle Times*, May 19, 2007. Available at http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/html/nationworld/2003713518_rumor19.html.

⁴⁰ The count includes two episodes of *Lou Dobbs This Week*. For both shows, we also counted separately rebroadcasts of segments mentioning "NAFTA Superhighway" on later episodes that were not repeats of the entire show. (For instance, a segment discussing the "NAFTA Superhighway" on the February 27, 2007, edition of *The Glenn Beck Show* was reused for the March 2, 2007, edition of the show; both editions were included in our count.)

Despite repeated attempts by officials and experts to debunk the myth of a NAFTA Superhighway, some remain staunch believers in the conspiracy. On the October 2, 2007, edition of *Glenn Beck*, the host seemed to revel in the fact that he advocated a theory others dismissed as absurd. "Nobody is talking about it," he said. "It's a giant roadway that will run across the United States connecting Canada and Mexico. Why is no one talking about it? Um, because no one will admit to it. It's only crazy people like me that dare mention it on the air." He also linked the superhighway to immigration: "The NAFTA super highway will hurt our national security. It will open new avenues for illegal immigration." Three weeks later, on October 24, Beck dismissed the doubters: "You've got the trans -- the NAFTA superhighway that, again, everybody denies, but you've got it broken up in chunks being built right now."

As in other cases, it is not necessary for a television host to repeat every detail of a conspiracy theory in order to lend that theory credence it does not deserve. And confusion about the idea is only encouraged by the fact that Dobbs sometimes uses the term "NAFTA Superhighway" to refer to an existing network of roads, while at other times he refers to a newly constructed highway, and at yet other times, he seems to refer to both. For instance, he introduced a June 2006 report on the NAFTA Superhighway by saying, "The U.S. government is pushing ahead with its plans for a massive superhighway that would divide the United States, running from Mexico to Canada, a highway that would run through the heart of the nation." In the report, however, correspondent Bill Tucker said the highway is "several different projects collectively known as the NAFTA Superhighway."⁴¹

In a February 21, 2007 report that Dobbs introduced by citing "[n]ew concerns tonight about moves toward what some call a North America union," correspondent Lisa Sylvester explicitly linked the NAFTA Superhighway to immigration. "This partnership is being driven by the U.S. business community, which envisions ships from China docking in Mexico instead of California, Mexican truck drivers transporting cargo on a NAFTA Superhighway, all the way to Canada. A cornerstone of this model is a guest worker immigration program that relaxes U.S. borders," Sylvester reported. She raised familiar anti-immigration themes, adding, "Critics say the plan would greatly benefit Mexico but could mean the loss of American jobs and an increase in social costs to U.S. taxpayers."

Dobbs sometimes discusses the issue in terms

⁴¹ Lou Dobbs Tonight, June 22, 2006.

vague enough that he might argue that he was actually referring simply to existing routes. But on the July 31, 2007, edition of his show, Dobbs said, "The mainstream media finally beginning to pick up on a story we've been reporting here for some time -- the plan to build a superhighway -- yes, it really exists -- all the way from Mexico through the United States to Canada."

Recently, Dobbs has focused attention on a controversy in Texas around a planned "Trans-Texas Corridor," a network of highways within the state of Texas whose future construction is supported by Gov. Rick Perry (R-TX), but which has garnered intense opposition within the state. Dobbs has taken to saying that the Trans-Texas Corridor *is* the NAFTA Superhighway. "In Texas tonight," he said on his February 20, 2008 show, "rising outrage over the so-called Trans-Texas Corridor, also known as the NAFTA Superhighway, you know that thing that Washington doesn't really want to admit is happening in this country." It was a follow-up to a story he did the night before: "It's the plan to build a massive superhighway. The Trans-Texas Corridor, the NAFTA Superhighway, which will run from our border with Mexico across Texas and that super highway intended to go all the way up to Canada." Dobbs then asked his viewers to vote in the nightly poll: "Do you believe the presidential candidates of both parties should be required to take a position on the North American Union and the NAFTA Superhighway?"

If there is any confusion about whether "the NAFTA Superhighway" refers to a soon-to-be constructed behemoth or merely to existing trade routes, Dobbs has done nothing to clear it up. His program sometimes includes a brief mention without any explanation, often in the form of viewer email, as in this example from April 2007: "Vicki in Michigan writes, 'Why are we still hearing nothing about the North American Union from Congress? Construction is due to begin on the NAFTA Superhighway in 2007 and Americans know nothing about this.'"⁴² Where Vicki got her information is impossible to say, but at the time there were articles on the Web alleging that construction on the Superhighway was soon to begin, written by the likes of Jerome Corsi. The viewer mail segment thus allows ideas with questionable provenance to be delivered to an audience of millions.

In recent months, there have been even more. "Time now for e-mail," Dobbs said in February 2008. "Sharon in Pennsylvania: 'Lou, where are all the environmentalists on the NAFTA Superhighway? They were there for the border fence, where are they now?' I think that's one of the best

⁴² Lou Dobbs Tonight, April 6, 2007.

questions in a long time about where are the environmentalists."⁴³ Three days earlier, Dobbs' read another viewer's comments on the air: "Barry in Pennsylvania wrote: 'Dear Lou, I just wonder how many politicians will lose their property due to "Eminent Domain" for the NAFTA Superhighway. If I was a betting man, I'd have to say none!' "⁴⁴

The night before that, Dobbs once again conflated the Trans-Texas Corridor with the NAFTA Superhighway, alleging with no evidence that the TTC will extend to Canada: "And we want to, if we may, bring to your attention something that has many Texans outraged. They want answers on that corridor, the NAFTA Superhighway running from Mexico through Texas all the way to Canada. Most Americans have joined Texas in wanting answers tonight. But Washington and the companies competing for those contracts don't want to provide them."⁴⁵ Dobbs has referred to the Trans-Texas corridor as "a proposal that has infuriated Texans, a proposal to build a super highway from our border with Mexico across Texas all the way to Canada,"⁴⁶ making clear he is talking not about existing routes but about a new construction project, and one not confined to Texas. As NASCO has written, however, "The Trans Texas Corridor is an initiative launched by Texas Governor Rick Perry and developed by the Texas Department of Transportation to attempt to solve the critical, long-range transportation problems projected for the State of Texas over the next 20 to 30 years ... We have no authority over this initiative and know of no plans to extend it to other states. Any decision to expand the TTC beyond the State of Texas would be made by that state's Department of Transportation."⁴⁷

The result of Dobbs' continuing crusade is that viewers of *Lou Dobbs Tonight* regularly hear references to the NAFTA Superhighway, though at various times the term as Dobbs uses it appears to refer to different things. What they do know is that the powers-that-be are trying to keep it hidden, and that the consequences will be dire.

• The North American Union

The NAFTA Superhighway is frequently mentioned in connection with another myth: the North

⁴³ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, February 25, 2008.

⁴⁴ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, February 22, 2008.

⁴⁵ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, February 21, 2008.

⁴⁶ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, February 18, 2008.

⁴⁷ "Myth vs. Fact," NASCO. Available at <http://www.nascocorridor.com/admin/images/docs/NASCO%20CONGRESSIONAL%20-%20Myth%20vs%20Fact%20December%202007.pdf>.

American Union. Some believe that there is a conspiracy to merge Mexico, the U.S., and Canada into an economic and political entity, like the European Union, that would share a common currency, the "amero."

According to [critics](#) who believe in the conspiracy, the plan took shape in a 2005 [report](#) by the Council on Foreign Relations titled "Building a North American Community," which called for the "establishment by 2010 of a North American economic and security community, the boundaries of which would be defined by a common external tariff and an outer security perimeter." Critics also see the 2005 Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America (SPP) among Mexico, the U.S., and Canada as the vehicle by which the North American Union will be created. Jerome Corsi, author of *The Late Great U.S.A.: The Coming Merger With Mexico and Canada* and one of the most vocal propagators of the North American Union story, [calls](#) the SPP a "secret agenda ... to dissolve the United States of America into the North American Union. The [Bush] administration has no intent to secure the border, or to enforce rigorously existing immigration laws."⁴⁸ (Corsi was also the co-author of the discredited book *Unfit for Command: Swift Boat Veterans Speak Out Against John Kerry* (Regnery, 2004) and has a [history](#) of posting racist, homophobic, xenophobic, anti-Catholic, and anti-Muslim comments on the conservative online forum FreeRepublic.com.)

But as numerous media outlets have reported, the North American Union is a conspiracy theory that has been conjured up by anti-immigrant and nativist groups. The Bush administration, responding to accusations that the SPP lays the groundwork for the North American Union, has declared on the SPP [website](#) that the rumors have no basis in truth. The SPP, it says, "does not change our courts or legislative processes and respects the sovereignty of the United States, Mexico, and Canada. The SPP in no way, shape or form considers the creation of a European Union-like structure or a common currency. The SPP does not attempt to modify our sovereignty or currency or change the American system of government designed by our Founding Fathers."⁴⁹

Last August, during a summit in Quebec, Canada, President Bush dismissed a question about the possibility of a North American Union. "It's quite comical, actually, when you realize the difference

⁴⁸ Jerome Corsi, "North American Union to Replace USA?" Human Events.com, May 19, 2006. Available at <http://www.humanevents.com/article.php?id=14965>.

⁴⁹ "SPP Myths vs. Facts," Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America. Available at http://www.spp.gov/myths_vs_facts.asp.

between reality and what some people are talking on TV about," Bush [said](#). Robert Pastor, an American University professor whose 2001 book, *Towards a North American Community: Lessons From the Old World for the New*, has been cited as a blueprint for the plan, [said](#), "Nobody is proposing a North American Union."⁵⁰ Yet, as *The Boston Globe* [reported](#) in November, "belief in the NAU -- that the plans are very real, and that the nation is poised to lose its independence -- has been spreading from its origins in the conservative fringe, coloring political press conferences and candidate question-and-answer sessions, and reaching a kind of critical mass on the campaign trail."⁵¹

Despite the denials by officials and experts, some media figures continue to spread the myth of a planned North American Union. As with many of myths discussed above, Dobbs has been the most prominent disseminator. While he has never mentioned the "amero" (perhaps the oddest part of the conspiracy theory), since January 1, 2006, the North American Union has been discussed on *Lou Dobbs Tonight* 56 times, with an additional 11 mentions on *Lou Dobbs This Week*. On the November 29, 2006, edition of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, Dobbs teased a "special report" on how "[t]he president is also determined to push his quiet agenda to create a North American Union of the United States, Mexico and Canada without the approval of the people or the Congress." On January 17, 2007, Dobbs told viewers, "It's unofficially known as the North American Union. Some, for some reason, suggest there's no such thing, that there is no plan to merge the United States and Mexico and the United States [sic] without the knowledge and approval of the citizens of those three countries. Well, tonight, you're going to find out that there really is such a thing and it's all part of a plan."

Dobbs has paid particular attention to the Security and Prosperity Partnership, portraying it as the first step to an abdication of American sovereignty. "The proposed legislation," he said of an immigration bill on May 30, 2007, "favored by President Bush and Senator Kennedy and others who are misguided, contains language in Section 413 that, if approved by Congress, would endorse and legitimize the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, which is the foundation of this administration's efforts to create a North American Union, and which would further threaten, in

⁵⁰ Dine, *Seattle Times*, May 19, 2007.

⁵¹ Drake Bennett, "The amero conspiracy," *The Boston Globe*, November 25, 2007. Available at http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2007/11/25/the_amero_conspiracy/?page=1..

my opinion, our national sovereignty." Ten days earlier, he was even more blunt -- although as he often does, Dobbs put the ideas in the mouths of unnamed "critics": "Critics of this amnesty deal say the agreement sells out American citizens, national security and this nation's sovereignty. Those critics say the Bush administration and some pro-amnesty lawmakers are hell bent on creating a North American union without the consent of the American people or Congress."⁵²

This idea -- that the SPP leads to the North American Union, which undercuts American sovereignty -- is one Dobbs has returned to many times. "The SPP, which many consider to be simply a blueprint for the North American Union," he said on June 21, 2007, "would weaken U.S. laws and regulations and diminish American sovereignty." Dobbs' reporters also repeat the charge. "You know, many people have not -- have not even heard about the Security and Prosperity Partnership, but there is a lot of criticism out there," Lisa Sylvester said on the August 20, 2007, edition of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*. "A lot of people believe that will mean a roll back of environmental and worker standards, and that we are just handing over our sovereignty for the rights of this North American Union." In an October 2006 report on the prospects for a North American Union that included quotes from Jerome Corsi and the head of the notorious John Birch Society, Sylvester said, "The coalition to block the North American union wants to defeat a proposed NAFTA superhighway that would stretch from Texas all the way to Canada." Dobbs then said, "These three countries moving ahead their governments without authorization from the American people, without congressional approval, this is straightforward an attack on national sovereignty as there could be, outside of war."⁵³

This is one of a number of areas in which Dobbs' rhetoric on immigration is at odds with that of the reporters on his own network. For instance, after President Bush's August 21, 2007, denial that there were secret plans for a North American Union, CNN reporter Suzanne Malveaux noted, "[T]here's a lot of talk in the blogosphere and conspiracy theorists who believe that this summit was really a secret plot, if you will, to establish a supergovernment in support of big business -- that even there'd be some sort of superhighway that would be traveling through all three of the countries." Yet in the very next hour, Lisa Sylvester -- who was guest hosting *Lou Dobbs Tonight* -- described Bush's comments as "an apparent shot at our very own Lou Dobbs and our reporting on the threats the SPP may

⁵² *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, May 20, 2007.

⁵³ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, October 27, 2006.

pose.”⁵⁴

Glenn Beck was a distant second to *Lou Dobbs Tonight* with nine mentions of the North American Union through the end of 2007. On the October 9, 2007, edition of his show, Beck hosted Corsi, who said, “[W]e’ve become a dual country. It’s headed toward the North American Union.” On December 18, 2007, Beck interviewed Rep. Ron Paul (R-TX) and discussed both the NAFTA Superhighway and the North American Union. Responding to Paul’s expressed belief that the North American Union wasn’t in the offing any time soon (despite how often Paul has railed against it), Beck said, “If you’ve done your homework, you know that the ambassador to the U.N. from Mexico says it [the NAU] has to happen before our Social Security and Baby Boomers start to retire. That’s just a few years away.”

• Reconquista

Another myth that has circulated on cable news with little refutation is the concept of “reconquista.” The term refers to the theory that portions of the American Southwest (territory referred to as “Aztlán”) belong to Mexico, and that there is a secret plan to retake this area for Mexico. In recent years, several media figures have alleged that undocumented immigrants from Mexico and activist groups that support them subscribe to a reconquista agenda.

The worst offender has been CNN’s Lou Dobbs. Since January 2006, *Lou Dobbs Tonight* has discussed or mentioned “reconquista” or “Aztlán” nine times. In two of the earliest mentions, the show described reconquista as not having “broad support”⁵⁵ and not representative of “the views of most Latinos.”⁵⁶ But in subsequent reports, the show portrayed it as growing in strength. On the March 31, 2006, edition of the show, correspondent Christine Romans said, “Long downplayed as a theory of the radical ethnic fringe, the la reconquista, the reconquest, the reclamation, the return, it’s resonating with some on the streets.” Romans went on to say, “[T]he growing street protests in favor of illegal immigration, Lou, are increasingly taking on the tone of that very radicalism.”

On May 2, 2006, correspondent Lisa Sylvester claimed, “The organizations [supporting pro-immigration boycotts and demonstrations] want

⁵⁴ See <http://mediamatters.org/items/200708220014> for more on this set of reports.

⁵⁵ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, January 4, 2006.

⁵⁶ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, January 9, 2006.

amnesty for all, and many openly embrace the reconquista movement, Mexico taking over the southwestern United States.” The reconquista theory was also raised by studio guest Pat Buchanan, who has also written about it in his book, *State of Emergency: The Third World Invasion and Conquest of America* (St. Martin’s Griffin, 2007). “The ultimate goal of [then Mexican President] Vicente Fox is the erasure of the border between the United States and Mexico,” Buchanan told Dobbs in September 2006.⁵⁷ “La reconquista is the objective, Lou.”

Dobbs’ program is not the only one on which the reconquista story has been told. On Fox News Channel’s *The O’Reilly Factor*, reconquista has been mentioned three times since 2006. Guest right-wing pundit Michelle Malkin claimed that “the intellectual underpinnings of reconquista are embraced by the vast majority of mainstream Hispanic politicians”⁵⁸ and that the pro-immigrant rallies in spring 2006 saw “hundreds of thousands of law breakers coming out and ... really pushing a very radical, extremist reconquista agenda.”⁵⁹ On multiple occasions, Glenn Beck has cited a poll conducted for an anti-immigration group allegedly proving that a majority of Mexicans think the American Southwest belongs to their country as evidence that the reconquista movement is real.⁶⁰

[Reconquista](#) is a term associated with [El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán](#), a document drafted in the early formation of the [Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán](#) (Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán, or MEChA), a group with affiliates at numerous college campuses and several high schools that [works](#) toward “improving the social and political situation of the Chicano/Latino community.”⁶¹ Critics [claim](#) that El Plan Espiritual de Aztlán outlines a plan of recapturing the Southwestern United States for Mexico and that MEChA itself promotes racial separatism.⁶² MEChA leaders, however, say that El Plan is an outmoded document from the 1960s. “When did we say we wanted a separate nation? We never did,” [said](#) Graciela Larios, who was head of the University

⁵⁷ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, September 5, 2006.

⁵⁸ *The O’Reilly Factor*, March 30, 2006.

⁵⁹ *The O’Reilly Factor*, January 2, 2007.

⁶⁰ The group in question is Americans for Immigration Control; Beck cited the group’s 2002 poll (conducted by Zogby) on May 9, 2006, May 12, 2006, and August 31, 2006. The poll may be read at http://www.immigrationcontrol.com/AIC_Zogby_Mexican_Poll.htm.

⁶¹ MEChA de Stanford, <http://cgi.stanford.edu/group/MEChA/cgi-bin/about.php>.

⁶² “Student Group Stands By ‘Reconquista’ Plan,” *WorldNetDaily*, February 7, 2004. Available at http://www.worldnetdaily.com/news/article.asp?ARTICLE_ID=36996.

of California, Riverside, MEChA club.⁶³ Gustavo Arellano, who writes the "iAsk a Mexican!" column for the *OC Weekly* and was a former member of MEChA, in a column for the *Los Angeles Times* [wrote](#), "few members take these hilariously dated relics of the 1960s seriously, if they even bother to read them." Arellano added, "MEChA's primary objectives are not secessionist but educational (get as many Latino high schoolers into the universities as possible and help them stay there) and cultural."⁶⁴

The influence of the extreme right on the mainstream press was literally on display in a May 2006 *Lou Dobbs Tonight* report on then Mexican President Vicente Fox's visit to Salt Lake City.⁶⁵ In that [report](#), correspondent Casey Wian characterized Fox's trip as a "Mexican military incursion," and claimed that "[y]ou could call" Fox's trip to the United States "the Vicente Fox Aztlan tour." During the report, CNN [featured a graphic](#) of "Aztlan" that was sourced to the [Council of Conservative Citizens](#) (CCC) -- an organization linked to white supremacists and often described as a descendant of the White Citizens Councils present in the South in the middle part of the 20th century, which were known as the "uptown Klan."⁶⁶ A CNN spokesperson called the inclusion of the CCC graphic "regrettabl[e]."

• Voter Fraud

Another myth that has been repeated about undocumented immigrants is the notion that large numbers of them are attempting to vote illegally.⁶⁷ The main purveyor of this myth is, once again, CNN's Lou Dobbs. In 2007, there were 24 episodes of *Lou Dobbs Tonight* and *Lou Dobbs This Week* that raised the specter of voter fraud among undocumented immigrants.

⁶³ David Kelly, "Vision That Inspires Some and Scares Others: Aztlan," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 2006, B2. Available at http://seattletimes.nwsources.com/html/nationworld/2003128400_aztlan15.html.

⁶⁴ Gustavo Arellano, "Raza Isn't Racist," *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 2006. Available at <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/commentary/la-oe-arellano15jun15,0,3083983.story>.

⁶⁵ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, May 23, 2006.

⁶⁶ The CCC's history gained exposure when Sen. Trent Lott was revealed to have spoken before them; see, for instance, Cragg Hines, "Lott of Explaining Can't Change Record," *Houston Chronicle*, December 15, 2002, Outlook p. 2.

⁶⁷ In recent years, conservatives have argued that fraud at polling places, such as voter impersonation, is a widespread problem. Though they have been unable to provide any evidence that such cases occur in anything more than comically small numbers, they have succeeded in passing laws in a number of states requiring voters to show photo identification. Opponents of such laws point out that many people, particularly among the elderly, do not have photo IDs; the Supreme Court is currently considering the validity of such laws.

All of Dobbs' mentions of the issue occurred after September 2007. The story that prompted most of his coverage was former New York Gov. Eliot Spitzer's plan to allow undocumented immigrants to apply for a state driver's license. According to Dobbs and other opponents of the proposal, allowing undocumented immigrants to obtain licenses would open the door to voter fraud by allowing immigrants who are not here legally to register and vote.

Dobbs raised the specter of so many undocumented immigrants voting that our very democracy would be in peril. On the October 23, 2007, edition of his show, he called Spitzer's plan an "outrageous proposal to give away those driver's licenses to illegal aliens and open the door to massive voter fraud." On October 25, 2007, Dobbs said of Spitzer, "He doesn't seem to care much about the issue of massive voter fraud, which he is providing here." On his November 7, 2007, show, Dobbs proclaimed that Spitzer's proposal was "a planned, purposeful fraud on voting ... And if that happens, it is a democracy absolutely in jeopardy."

In one report, the show brought up an actual example of voter fraud. On the December 3, 2007, broadcast, correspondent Bill Tucker reported "that more than 300 illegal aliens had successfully registered to vote in just one county in [Texas]." That claim presumably referred to a report earlier in the year by Bexar County Elections Administrator Jacque Callanen that 330 noncitizens [were registered to vote](#) in the county.⁶⁸ Despite Tucker's claim, the county did not report that all 300 were undocumented, merely that they were not citizens. And how many of these actually had cast a vote in elections since 2001? The number was 41. Moreover, there have been only 22 election fraud cases in Texas since 2002, all of which involved mail-in ballots, campaign finance, or unlawful conduct at polling places.⁶⁹

Dobbs also warned of voter fraud in the 2008 primary elections. Prior to the Nevada caucuses, Dobbs claimed, "The powerful Culinary Workers Union is to play a critical role in that effort. The union is encouraging its members to caucus on behalf of Senator Obama -- but in point of fact, as many as half of the union's members are illegal aliens." In fact, Dobbs' "point of fact" was

⁶⁸ Associated Press, "Noncitizens likely voted in Bexar County," *The Dallas Morning News*, June 10, 2007. Available at http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/dws/news/texasouthwest/stories/DN-votefraud_10tex.ART.State.Edition1.4454f8d.html.

⁶⁹ Gary Scharrer, "Lawmakers Look Into a Problem That May Not Exist," *Houston Chronicle*, January 26, 2008, p. 4.

wrong. The union's political director had told the Associated Press that half the union's members are immigrants, not "illegal aliens."⁷⁰

As for the larger claim of voter fraud made by Dobbs and others, study after study has shown that voter fraud is an exceedingly rare occurrence. Michael Waldman and Justin Levitt of the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law state that proven voter fraud "[happens about as often as death by lightning strike](#)."⁷¹ According to a [study](#) of the issue by Lorraine C. Minnite, a professor at Barnard College in Columbia University, only 24 people were convicted of or pleaded guilty to federal voter fraud charges between 2002 and 2005.⁷² Another [study](#) by the nonpartisan research institute Demos concluded, "Available evidence suggests that the incidence of election fraud is minimal across the 50 U.S. states and rarely affects election outcomes."⁷³ Moreover, academics and historians say that the objective of most voter fraud claims throughout U.S. history has been the disenfranchisement of certain voting blocs in the U.S. Minnite [writes](#), "Fraud allegations today typically point the finger at those belonging to the same categories of voters accused of fraud in the past -- the marginalized and formerly disenfranchised, urban dwellers, immigrants, blacks, and lower status voters. These populations are mostly found among those still struggling for full inclusion in American life."⁷⁴

These facts notwithstanding, Lou Dobbs continues to offer an imagined epidemic of voter fraud as one more reason to be angry about illegal immigration.

• Leprosy

Of the many myths about undocumented immigrants that have circulated in recent years, one of the most insidious is that they are responsible for an increase in the number of leprosy cases in the United States. The worst offender is, unsurprisingly, CNN's Lou Dobbs.

⁷⁰ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, January 16, 2008; Kathleen Hennessey, "Presidential candidates to woo powerful union in Las Vegas," Associated Press, March 23, 2007.

⁷¹ Michael Waldman and Justin Levitt, "The Myth of Voter Fraud," *The Washington Post*, March 29, 2007. Available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/03/28/AR2007032801969.html>.

⁷² Lorraine C. Minnite, "The Politics of Voter Fraud" (Washington: Project Vote, 2007). Available at http://projectvote.org/fileadmin/ProjectVote/Publications/Politics_of_Voter_Fraud_Final.pdf.

⁷³ Minnite and David Callahan, "Securing the Vote: An Analysis of Election Fraud" (New York: Demos, 2003). Available at http://www.demos.org/pubs/EDR_-_Securing_the_Vote.pdf.

⁷⁴ Minnite, 2007.

Dobbs has discussed leprosy (technically known as Hansen's disease) in the context of illegal immigration a total of 10 times since 2005. The first time he brought up the issue was on the April 14, 2005, edition of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*.⁷⁵ In that episode, CNN correspondent Christine Romans quoted "medical lawyer" Dr. Madeleine Cosman as saying, "We have some enormous problems with horrendous diseases that are being brought into America by illegal aliens," including "diseases we have only rarely had here in America, such as Chagas Disease, leprosy, malaria." Romans added that, according to Cosman, "there were about 900 cases of leprosy [in the U.S.] for 40 years. There have been 7,000 in the past three years."

But on the May 6, 2007, [edition](#) of CBS' *60 Minutes*, correspondent Lesley Stahl refuted that report. According to Stahl, data from the National Hansen's Disease Program (NHDP) of the Department of Health and Human Services showed that "7,000 is the number of leprosy cases over the last 30 years, not the past three, and nobody knows how many of those cases involve illegal immigrants." (According to the NHDP, there were just 398 cases of Hansen's disease between 2002 and 2004 -- the "past three years" at the time of Cosman's statement.) Dobbs defended Romans' citation and told Stahl, "If we reported it, it's a fact."

On the next evening's edition of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, both Dobbs and Romans defended their claims. Romans stated, "We don't make up numbers here," adding that she was quoting the "7,000 cases of leprosy" statistic from an article "in *The Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*" by "Cosman, a respected medical lawyer and medical historian." Romans again quoted Cosman's article, stating, "Suddenly, in the past three years America has more than 7,000 cases of leprosy."⁷⁶ But as Carl Bialik of *The Wall Street Journal* [wrote](#) in a May 8, 2007, post on his blog, The Numbers Guy, Cosman had cited a February 18, 2003, *New York Times* [article](#) to justify her claim of the number of people afflicted with leprosy. Bialik noted that the *Times* article had compared the "900 recorded cases in the United States 40 years ago" with the number "today," in which "more than 7,000 people have leprosy." The article was *not* referring to occurrences of leprosy "in the past

⁷⁵ The total includes two segments on *Lou Dobbs This Week* that previously aired on *Lou Dobbs Tonight* and a May 18, 2007, viewer email read by Dobbs on the air alleging that a rise in leprosy in the U.S. can be traced to Mexican immigrants.

⁷⁶ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, May 7, 2007.

three years," as Cosman wrote.⁷⁷

Despite the fact that Romans' original 2005 report on leprosy has been proven false, Dobbs has never admitted to the error on his show. Indeed, on the May 16, 2007, [edition](#) of *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, Dobbs sought to revive the leprosy scare, stating, "The number of reported incidents of leprosy in this country is rising and that isn't the worst of it." Though Dobbs was now citing accurate statistics, viewers may have wondered if an increase of leprosy cases to a total of 166 in the entire country was really something to worry about. Correspondent Bill Tucker presented the report, ending the segment by saying, "The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service requires that legal residents be screened for leprosy, but that screening is not effective if a person is not symptomatic. Of course, illegal immigrants are not screened at all." On the June 18, 2007, [edition](#) of CNN's *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, Dobbs tried to downplay his program's airing and affirming of a falsehood about the number of leprosy cases in the United States, saying the comment was "eight seconds long and, as I said, took place two and a half years ago." He also [claimed](#) that the May 16, 2007, report "set the record straight," even though it did not note the uncritical citation of the false statistic or Dobbs' repeated defense of it.

While *Lou Dobbs Tonight* has raised the leprosy myth the most, other shows have also been guilty of perpetuating it. On the October 11, 2006, episode of Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor*, guest Pat Buchanan stated that "a lot [of] diseases are coming back. And it's because these 12 million illegals are coming across the border. ... Leprosy is making a comeback." On the May 30, 2007, edition of MSNBC's *Scarborough Country*, Buchanan repeated Dobbs' claim that there were "7,000 cases [of leprosy] in the first three years of this century, only 900 in the last 30 years before it." In neither instance did the hosts correct Buchanan's claim.

[According](#) to James L. Krahenbuhl, director of the NHDP, Hansen's disease "is not a public health problem."⁷⁸ As reported by *The New York Times* in mid-2007, Krahenbuhl noted that the recent rise in Hansen's disease cases "could be a statistical fluctuation, or it could be a result of better data collection in recent years." According to the *Times*

⁷⁷ Carl Bialik, "Dobbs Report Links Leprosy and Immigration, But Number Don't Hold Up," *The Numbers Guy*, *The Wall Street Journal*, May 8, 2007. Available at <http://blogs.wsj.com/numbersguy/dobbs-report-links-leprosy-and-immigration-but-numbers-dont-hold-up-101/>.

⁷⁸ David Leonhardt, "Truth, Fiction and Lou Dobbs," *The New York Times*, May 30, 2007. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/30/business/30leonhardt.html>.

report, "[T]he 137 reported cases [in 2006] were fewer than in any year from 1975 to 1996."

Every Vote a Landslide

Every night, Lou Dobbs asks viewers to vote yes or no on a poll question that he poses. These questions revolve around Dobbs' pet issues, illegal immigration in particular, and are usually framed in ways that ensure an overwhelming response affirming the CNN host's own views. Indeed, the results of Dobbs' viewer polls tend to resemble those of elections in dictatorships, with tallies that frequently hit 95 percent and higher in agreement with Dobbs' stance on the issue. Here are some recent results:

"The results of tonight's poll -- 99 percent of you say the majority of American citizens want a federal government that will secure our ports and borders and enforce our immigration laws." (December 20, 2007)

"The results of our poll, 98 percent of you responding that it is reasonable and appropriate for American citizens to expect that local state and federal governments will work together to enforce all of U.S. laws including immigration. How about that?" (December 14, 2007)

"Ninety-three percent of you say efforts to confer benefits on illegal aliens designed to expedite a nationwide massive voter fraud. We'll see." (October 23, 2007)

"The results of our poll tonight overwhelming -- 95 percent of you say the federal government will not act to stop concerted efforts nationwide to register millions of illegal aliens in advance of our 2008 elections." (October 16, 2007)

"The results of tonight's poll: 99 percent of you are outraged that the federal government is releasing tens of thousands of illegal aliens onto U.S. streets instead of deporting them." (September 13, 2007)

"Now, the results of tonight's poll -- 98 percent of you do not believe Congress will actually provide the necessary resources to prosecute and jail every illegal alien caught crossing the border." (August 28, 2007)

"Now the results of our poll: 95 percent of you responding that the federal aid should be cut off to sanctuary cities that protect illegal aliens in America. And 5 percent, of course, disagreeing." (April 23, 2007)

"Ninety-eight percent of you voted that illegal immigration, failed border security and sanctuary laws are contributing to the rise in gang violence in this country." (March 5, 2007)

"The results of tonight's poll, overwhelming, 98 percent of you saying you don't believe our already broken Social Security system can handle paying benefits to illegal aliens who work in this country 18 months." (January 3, 2007)

VALIDATING THE EXTREMISTS

While O'Reilly and Beck have certainly contributed their share of fuel to the anti-immigrant fire, it is Lou Dobbs who is at the center of the controversy over immigration. All these programs, particularly *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, not only provide a means for immigration myths to achieve a wide circulation, but they also offer a forum for some of the most extreme elements of the anti-immigrant movement.

Lou Dobbs hosts a variety of opponents of illegal immigration on his program. For instance, representatives of the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS), a group that campaigns for tougher immigration policies, were interviewed or quoted on *Lou Dobbs Tonight* 34 times in 2007. But while groups like CIS might have some mainstream credibility, other guests do not. Dobbs has on many occasions hosted members of the Minuteman Project, a group that sends its members, bearing arms, to the border to look for people sneaking across from Mexico. Jim Gilchrist, one of the co-founders of the group, has been quoted or interviewed on *Lou Dobbs Tonight* 24 times. "I'm not going to promote insurrection, but if it happens, it will be on the conscience of the members of Congress who are doing this," Gilchrist told *The Orange County Register* in 2006. "I will not promote violence in resolving this, but I will not stop others who might pursue that."⁷⁹ Chris Simcox, another Minuteman co-founder, has been quoted or appeared on Dobbs' program a total of 18 times. At the end of an interview on March 31, 2005, Dobbs told Simcox, "Outstanding. We wish you all the success in the world."⁸⁰ Gilchrist has appeared four times on *Glenn Beck*, and both he and Simcox have appeared on *The O'Reilly Factor* (Gilchrist four times, Simcox three times).

Although more extreme groups might not get the kind of on-air endorsement that Simcox got from Dobbs, they express great satisfaction in his crusade against illegal immigration. Dobbs may or may not have known much about the Council of Conservative Citizens before he used its map of "Aztlan" on his program, but the group certainly knows about him. The CCC posts links and video clips of Dobbs' shows on its website, as do some of its affiliate chapters. The St. Louis chapter of the CCC, for instance, regularly praises Dobbs on its blog. One entry after the Fox News Channel announced it would host a debate with

⁷⁹ Martin Wisckol, "Minutemen to Patrol Border in 4 States," *The Orange County Register*, March 30, 2006.

⁸⁰ Since its founding, the Minuteman Project has split into multiple groups, one of which Simcox now heads.

the Congressional Black Caucus read, "Most of the chatter on this issue is from leftists and radical blacks, along the lines of, 'CBC, How Could You?' The pertinent and real question should be from our people, 'FNC, How Could You?' If Fox had a right wing reputation once upon a time, they're losing it. These days, the two most conservative cable TV talking heads are not on Fox. They are Lou Dobbs (CNN) and Glenn Beck (CNN-HN)."⁸¹ When Dobbs used the CCC's "Aztlan" map, the blog wrote, "Welcome Lou Dobbs. I knew you were one of us all along."⁸²

The CCC is hardly the only extremist group that counts itself among Dobbs' fans. The right-wing John Birch Society -- which has a special page on its website devoted to the North American Union⁸³ -- regularly posts articles relating Dobbs' statements on immigration and attacking those who criticize Dobbs. When the Southern Poverty Law Center took out a newspaper ad criticizing Dobbs last May, the JBS wrote, "Those who accept SPLC's alarmism don't seem to realize that without its incessant cries of rampant racism and hatred, the money wouldn't be flowing into the group's coffers. And when there isn't any credible reason to scream about hatred and bigotry, attacking Lou Dobbs with claims of inaccuracy seem designed to accomplish the money-raising goal."⁸⁴ Decrying a *New Yorker* article about Dobbs as being too critical, the JBS wrote, "If you start acting like an honorary member of the John Birch Society on national TV then, is it any wonder that you are going to have a smear campaign conducted against you?"⁸⁵

Of course, Dobbs has no control over the statements others make about him, whether praise or scorn (and he has called the CCC "a reprehensible organization based on its beliefs and attitudes"⁸⁶). But he is hailed by the entire spectrum of immigration opponents, from the reasonable to the unreasonable. And the degree to which extremist elements see Dobbs as an ally indicates at the very least that they believe he is helping their cause.

⁸¹ <http://countenance.wordpress.com/2007/03/30/the-decline-and-fall-of-the-fox-news-channel/>.

⁸² <http://countenance.wordpress.com/2006/05/25/welcome-lou-dobbs/>. On June 21, 2007, the proprietor of this blog wrote that he was splitting it off and running the blog of the St. Louis chapter of the CCC separately.

⁸³ <http://www.jbs.org/nau>.

⁸⁴ <http://www.jbs.org/node/3969>.

⁸⁵ <http://www.jbs.org/node/2125>.

⁸⁶ *Lou Dobbs Tonight*, May 16, 2007.

FEAR, ANGER, AND HATE

Whatever your views on the subject of illegal immigration, it would be hard to argue that the debate over the issue should not be based on facts and conducted with civility. Yet all too frequently, prominent media figures discuss illegal immigration with rhetoric that is both inaccurate and inflammatory. Cable news personalities like Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly, and Pat Buchanan have over the years brought down the level of discourse and smeared immigrants with irresponsible and divisive language. Below is a sampling of what has been said on cable news and nationally syndicated conservative talk radio in recent years.

- **Glenn Beck**

"Every undocumented worker is an illegal immigrant, a criminal and a drain on our dwindling resources." -- Glenn Beck, September 4, 2007

"I've got a quick message for illegal aliens if you happen to be watching. You better start packing your bags. And to the politicians in Washington who are soft on illegal immigration, start packing up your office, because when the terrorists strike, which they will, and we find out that they're here illegally from some other country, we will be telling all of you to get the hell out." -- Glenn Beck, May 9, 2007

"America's border crisis. Rape, drugs, kidnapping, even murder. It is beginning to look a lot more like a border war." -- Glenn Beck, November 8, 2007

"It's time we wake up in this country. We are dealing with an illegal alien crime wave, and drug smuggling is just the beginning." -- Glenn Beck, January 12, 2007

"Earlier this week, I told you about the five-part plan that I believe may lead to the end of the West as we know it. I called it my 'Perfect Storm.' One of the elements of that perfect storm is illegal immigration. It is still a great way for terrorists to come here and mess with us. But even if that doesn't happen -- at the very least, illegal immigrants are attacking our culture, and our way of life. They are not melting into our melting pot. They're here for the cash." -- Glenn Beck, August 24, 2006

"So, welcome to Cinco de Flag amusement park. So, bienvenidos a Cinco de Flag amusement park. Come see our new line-up of thrill rides, like the biggest rollercoaster in Me-hee-ho, El Nino.

Standing a whopping 32 feet tall, it drops an amazing 10 feet in 15 seconds! Run for the border in the terrifying tractor-trailer run. We simulate an 18-wheeler full of illegal immigrants trying to cross the border when the INS breaks in. See if you can make it!" -- Mock commercial, The Glenn Beck Program, May 5, 2006

"I also know our country is on fire, and the fuel is illegal immigration. There are about 12 to 15 million illegals in this country, and that number is growing by 500,000 every year. Recent investigations showed that in Los Angeles 95 percent of all warrants for homicide targeted illegal aliens. They put a strain on our Social Security, our education, our health care and, yes, national security." -- Glenn Beck, January 30, 2007

"Somebody comes across the border in the middle of the night, why are they doing that? Really, three reasons: One, they're terrorists; two, they're escaping the law; or three, they're hungry. They can't make a living in their own dirtbag country." -- The Glenn Beck Program, April 27, 2006

- **Bill O'Reilly**

"The most extreme elements in this country want open borders, blanket amnesty, and entitlement for foreign nationals who have come here illegally, and generally want to change the demographics in the USA so political power can be assumed by the left. That is the end game." -- The O'Reilly Factor, October 30, 2007

"Number one, the illegal aliens shouldn't be here. And number two, the culture from which they come is a lot more violent than the USA." -- The O'Reilly Factor, January 15, 2007

- **Pat Buchanan**

"You've got a wholesale invasion, the greatest invasion in human history, coming across your southern border, changing the composition and character of your country." -- Hannity & Colmes, November 26, 2007

"Twelve million people in the country is more than all the Irish, Jewish, and English folks who ever came. And more than that, every 20 months, we add a new Mexico in the Third World. You're going to add 30 new Mexicos by 2050, and they all know the door is open. If you grant amnesty -- and there's nothing in this bill that stops the invasion -- I think you lose the American Southwest." -- Tucker, June 25, 2007

"It's not immigration. There is an invasion of the United States of America. And until you put a security fence now along 2,000 miles of border, you are not going to stop this invasion. And it's coming not only from Mexico, it's coming from the whole world." -- *Hardball with Chris Matthews*, May 15, 2006

- **Michelle Malkin**

"The never-ending criminal alien revolving door -- that's the subject of this evening's 'Talking Points Memo.' Here we go again -- another heinous crime, another illegal alien suspect with a mile-long rap sheet, another bloody tragedy wrought by open borders." -- *The O'Reilly Factor*, August 10, 2007

"It was the far left, the open-borders activists, who were the ones who are the extremists, who were the ones advocating militant ethnic separatism. This is our stolen land. Chicano power. You had folks with Aztlan T-shirts mugging for the cameras in front of city hall. These are people who believe that the American southwest belongs to Mexico, that we don't have a right to enforce our borders, and who do nothing more than try to sabotage our sovereignty." -- *The O'Reilly Factor*, March 30, 2006

- **Michael Savage**

"I would say, let them fast until they starve to death, then that solves the problem. Because then we won't have a problem about giving them green cards because they're illegal aliens; they don't belong here to begin with." -- *The Savage Nation*, July 5, 2007

"I'm not allowed to raise the issue or the specter of brown supremacists behind these protests. Don't tell me this is all about compassion for immigrants, because it is not at all only about compassion for immigrants. They are trying to provoke the takeover of the United States of America." -- *The Savage Nation*, April 11, 2007

- **Neal Boortz**

"This person sent me an email, said when -- when we defeat this illegal alien amnesty bill and when we yank out the welcome mat and they all start going back to Mexico, as a going-away gift let's all give them a box of nuclear waste. Give 'em all a little nuclear waste and let 'em take it on down there to Mexico. Tell 'em it can -- it'll heat tortillas ... I love it." -- *The Neal Boortz Show*, June 21,

2007

"There is no intent to shut the border down. None. If there was, they [Congress] would do what the American people want them to do: pass a law, appropriate the money, and fund it -- to build a double fence along the Mexican border, and stop the damn invasion. I don't care if Mexicans pile up against that fence like tumbleweeds in the Santa Ana winds in Southern California. Let 'em. You know, then just run a couple of taco trucks up and down the line, and somebody's gonna be a millionaire out of that." -- *The Neal Boortz Show*, June 18, 2007

- **John Gibson**

"Now, it's time for 'My Word.' Do your duty. Make more babies. That's a lesson drawn out of two interesting stories over the last couple of days. First, a story yesterday that half of the kids in this country under five years old are minorities. By far, the greatest number are Hispanic. You know what that means? Twenty-five years and the majority of the population is Hispanic. Why is that? Well, Hispanics are having more kids than others. Notably, the ones Hispanics call 'gabachos' -- white people -- are having fewer." -- *The Big Story with John Gibson*, May 11, 2006

METHODOLOGY

The quantitative portion of this study covered two immigration myths, that undocumented immigrants are responsible for a disproportionate degree of crime, and that undocumented immigrants strain social services and/or do not pay taxes.

In order to make the analysis as straightforward as possible, we did not evaluate the accuracy of every particular claim made on these topics. Instead, we sought merely to assess how often the claims were made. It is possible to leave a mistaken impression while avoiding specific falsehoods. For instance, doing story after story on a single case of an undocumented immigrant responsible for two deaths in a drunken driving incident -- and focusing all the attention on the perpetrator's immigration status -- will encourage viewers to conclude that there is a large problem of undocumented immigrants driving drunk, when in fact there is no evidence to suggest that is the case.

For these two myths, the following search queries were employed in LexisNexis:

Crime

(SHOW(Lou Dobbs Tonight) OR SHOW(O'Reilly Factor) OR SHOW(Glenn Beck)) AND ((Illegal Immigration OR Illegal Immigrants OR Illegal Aliens OR Undocumented OR PLURAL(Illegals)) W/50 (Crime OR Criminal OR Homicide OR Murder OR Rape OR Robbery))

Social Services & Taxes

(SHOW(Lou Dobbs Tonight) OR SHOW(O'Reilly Factor) OR SHOW(Glenn Beck)) AND ((Illegal Immigration OR Illegal Immigrants OR Illegal Aliens OR Undocumented OR PLURAL(Illegals)) W/50 (Social Services OR (Social Security NOT W/2 (Number OR Record OR Card OR Administration)) OR Medicaid OR Medicare OR (Welfare NOT W/2 Reform) OR Food Stamps OR Emergency Medical OR Emergency Room))

(SHOW(Lou Dobbs Tonight) OR SHOW(O'Reilly Factor) OR SHOW(Glenn Beck)) AND ((Illegal Immigration OR Illegal Immigrants OR Illegal Aliens OR Undocumented OR PLURAL(Illegals)) W/50 ((Taxes NOT W/2 (Income OR Cuts)) OR Taxpayers OR Taxation OR Public Funding))

These searches were limited to 2007. Each incidence was then read, and only those cases in which the host, a correspondent, or a guest actually made a claim about the myth in question (e.g., "We are dealing with an illegal alien crime wave") was counted. The unit of analysis was the program episode; if the claim was made in an episode, it was counted once, regardless of how many times it might have been restated or repeated on that episode.

It is important to note that because we strictly adhered to the 50-word rule -- meaning the terms referring to crime or social services/taxes had to appear within 50 words of "illegal immigration" and its variants -- the figures reported here actually *understate* the prevalence of these topics on these programs.

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