

## **Britain: Now a land of immigrants**

**In England, more than 11 percent of the general population is now foreign born.**

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Britain has become a land of immigrants, said Nicholas Cecil in the *London Evening Standard*. The Office for National Statistics has just revealed that the share of the foreign-born in the general population has doubled in the past two decades, to more than 11 percent. That's approaching the U.S. level of 12.5 percent. In a major speech last week, Prime Minister David Cameron, a Conservative, said mass immigration has led to "discomfort and disjointedness" in many communities where the newcomers fail to assimilate. He blamed the "woeful welfare system" that pays British citizens not to work and leaves employment gaps to be filled by foreign workers. He also accused Labor "of failing to deal with the issue while branding people with genuine concerns as racist."

It's about time someone had the courage to say it, said Ruth Dudley Edwards in the *London Telegraph*. "Well-meaning multiculturalism" has wrecked our formerly close-knit communities. My West London neighborhood has been transformed over the past five years into a Polish ghetto, where the new inhabitants have "zero interest in integrating." They watch Polish TV, open Polish stores selling Polish food and newspapers, and learn just enough English to get by. Don't get me wrong: I don't blame the immigrants. "The blame lies at the feet of our rulers for failing to set clear boundaries by requiring them to learn English, respect British culture, and obey the house rules." Instead, for too long our leaders told us we needed to "change the rules to accommodate the newcomers."

Here we go again, said Daniel Trilling in the *London Guardian*. Cameron's speech denouncing immigration is just a "dog whistle for the Right." Local elections are coming up, and so, right on cue, the Tories cater to the bigotry of white English folk. "The prime minister may not himself be a racist, but his language certainly panders to racism." In reality, of course, more than half of the people being counted as immigrants are actually European Union citizens—and overwhelmingly white—who are allowed to live in any EU country and who have settled in Britain because they have found work here. And they are driving our economy, said Mehdi Hasan, also in *The Guardian*. Studies show that immigrants are twice as likely to start a business as native-born Britons. Without foreign doctors, the National Health Service "would grind to a halt," and without foreign students paying much higher fees than locals, "our universities would go bust." Economically, immigration is a net gain for Britain.

And yet it is undeniable that something has also been lost, said Charles Moore in *The Telegraph*. That something is Englishness. Certainly it will be "possible, though hard, to forge a United Kingdom made up of many ethnicities." It may end up being a dynamic and wonderful country. "But whatever it is, and however well it turns out, it cannot be England." What will I tell my grandchildren when they ask what England was? "I think I shall tell them that it seemed like a good idea while it lasted, and that it lasted for about 1,000 years."