

The Great Fake H1-B Controversy

By Roger L Simon

Sigmund Freud had a term for it—the “narcissism of small differences”.

In this case, Wikipedia explains it well: “... the more a relationship or community shares commonalities, the more likely the people in it are to engage in interpersonal feuds and ridicule because of hypersensitivity to minor differences.”



We all recognize this pattern that manifests in various ways from the bickering of married couples to successful rock bands breaking up. The most minor disputes explode into major ones that no one wanted in the first place with sometimes disastrous

results.

This fits the internal MAGA dispute over H1-B visas to the proverbial T. The only ones who profit from this kerfuffle, or whatever it is, are the left and their fading media allies, desperate for something to latch onto about MAGA and create dissension.

Do we want to give them that privilege at this point? Frankly, I think it's stupid, especially for a disagreement that would

likely work itself out almost automatically and favorably for almost all concerned anyway. (Yes, there will always be complainers, but that's, well, the world.)

This uproar began when Donald Trump selected as his AI advisor technologist Sriram Krishnan, a man who came here on something called an L-1 visa (intra-company transfer) in 2007 to work at Microsoft.

Some ultra-MAGA loyalists became extremely upset. Why not an American, they demanded, ignoring that most of Trump's other picks were as ultra-MAGA and American as they are.

It escalated as Vivek Ramaswamy and Elon Musk logged on in favor of H1-B, the temporary visa for highly-trained people from abroad.

Vivek wrote something on X that was fairly obvious but nonetheless sent his adversaries further up the wall—that the American educational system has been bad for so long that we didn't have enough domestic talent to fit all the necessary tech roles.

Of course, he was right. We don't need to rehearse the litany of academic monstrosities from woke to DEI that have turned our universities into indoctrination camps, sending real education into the caboose. I would argue this goes back even further than Vivek said, all the way to John Dewey.

Beyond that, it has been alleged that our educational system is too slow for the pace of tech, students finally learning what they need to know in graduate school when young people in other countries are already utilizing the latest ever-changing tech developments as teenagers.

Also at play is that compared to the rest of the world we are a rich society. Inertia has set in, the fire gone from the belly. Not everyone has Trump's fight, fight, fight, though we may be learning.. But young people in poorer nations already

have a deep need to excel due to their conditions. Witness how in tennis great players are coming from places like Belarus and Serbia.

We need the H1-B to bring the best here to be able to compete. The national security implications are obvious.

Finally, it is immigrants, LEGAL immigrants, who have built much of this country. We should be celebrating this. It's real diversity rather than the faux leftwing kind.

That's the argument in favor. What about the against?

The H1-B has been misused by a number—we don't know exactly how many but we should—in order to clerk at the likes of 7-Elevens rather than perform complex scientific tasks for which domestic personnel were not available.

Further, companies have been using this as a source of cheap labor.

I have, however, heard this last contradicted by my own daughter who works in hiring for a major tech company that will be nameless for family protection. (I guarantee you would recognize it.) Her job is to recommend H1-B candidates from across the globe. She assures me her company saves no money from this (the ancillary costs are high) and only does it after exhausting domestic possibilities.

Of course, it's true that many of our most prominent companies are outsourcing the manufacturing to other nations for obvious economic reasons, but that's a separate matter that needs to be dealt with.

Writing this all down has convinced me this is indeed nothing but a kerfuffle of the most minor sort that has been taken up by the media ad nauseam in recent days. This is especially so since the room for compromise here couldn't be clearer. Toughen up the rules for qualifying for H1-B—they may actually

be there; in that case, observe them –make sure it isn't a form of discount labor, and continue the program under more stringent guidelines.

But far more importantly, do something about our educational system. That's the sputtering dragonfly in the ointment. Then we will have plenty of qualified people domestically. The H1-B program at that point might even be phased out.

Nevertheless, I believe it's still useful, even imperative, to bring people in from abroad—legally, of course—to gain other perspectives. No person or country has the full story.

A Serbian named Nikola Tesla immigrated to the United States in 1884 to convince Thomas Edison his alternating current (AC) electrical generators were more efficient than Edison's DC systems. Edison demurred, and this ignited the War of the Currents. The rest is history.

In another moment from history, an immigrant from South Africa who became a US citizen in 2002, invented an automobile named after Tesla that has become the first efficient self-driving car. (I can attest to that, having driven it, or been driven by it.)

That man, whom we all know is Elon Musk, suggested a compromise Dec. 28 not all that different from what I sketched in above. He wrote on his own X: "Easily fixed by raising the minimum salary significantly and adding a yearly cost for maintaining the H1B, making it materially more expensive to hire from overseas than domestically."

Indeed. Is everybody happy?

This is probably how this all would have ended up anyway, behind the scenes, without the public bickering whose source is described by Freud. That's why I called it a fake controversy.

Now let's stop feeding the reactionary left and get back to building the future.

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