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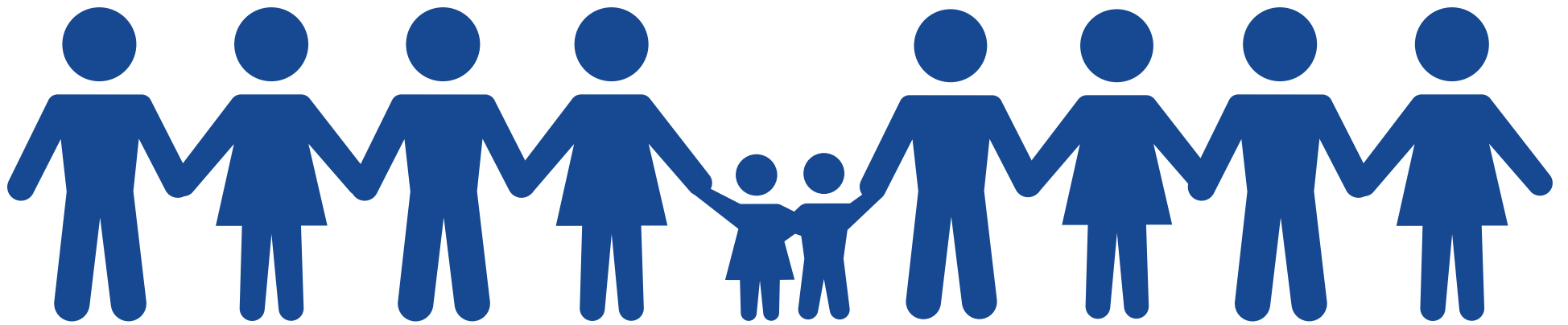
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▶ Brittany Perloff on Screaming for Vintage



## What's the Data on Chain Migration?

by Nora Haenn

Listening to news reports about “chain migration,” I was confused. Even as someone who researches the topic, I could not tell how many people come to the United States through chain migration. If chain migration is a problem, how big or small a problem is it? Because the news reports were not giving me the data I wanted, I dug around Department of Homeland Security to collect some statistics. In an earlier column, I explained how the United States issues various immigrant visas, each with their own requirements. It can be hard to talk about migration in the general sense when the devil is in the details. Here, I try to keep things simple.

Chain migration takes place when a US citizen or a legal permanent resident (a “green card” holder) requests and secures legal residency on behalf of “near relatives.” The US government also grants residency for other reasons—to skilled workers, refugees, and to an intriguing category of “certain special immigrants.” In all, the United States receives about 6 million applications for legal permanent residencies each year. Since 2000, about

1 million of these applications are approved annually. Of this number, 50 thousand go to people who win a lottery. The remaining green cards are mainly distributed on the basis of “family-sponsored preferences.” That is, these green cards are granted to family members of people already in the United States.

The definition of “near relative” is different for citizens and residents, and both groups are limited in who they can sponsor. US citizens may sponsor a parent, spouse, sibling, or son or daughter. Legal permanent residents may only support the applications of a spouse, son, or daughter.

Of the 1 million legal permanent residencies granted, somewhere in the range of 416,000 to 566,000 go to the family of US citizens. Estimates of green cards extended to the relatives of legal permanent residents range from 214,000 to 238,000. When policy-makers talk about cutting the number of people admitted to the country through “chain migration,” these are the numbers under consideration.

The argument against “chain migration” states that because migrants can sponsor

residency for their relatives, the policy creates a multiplier effect. The system appears to set up a “chain” in which some family members bring to the country others in their family tree. The extent to which this actually happens is unclear. Few people have studied the topic, leaving policy-makers to rely on the little research that does exist. Princeton University researchers Stacie Carr and Marta Tienda, for example, estimate that since the 1980s, a legal permanent resident who entered the United States with no family sponsorship went on to sponsor 2.5 to 3.4 relatives.

Future research may revise those numbers. In the meantime, our migratory system puts the breaks on this flow in a few ways. Although there are no caps on the number of near relatives an individual citizen or resident can sponsor, there are a limited number of green cards distributed each year. Also, under current regulations, Homeland Security must distribute these residencies across a variety of countries. No single country of origin can receive more than seven percent of the green cards issued in a single year. There are other

obstacles to having an application approved as well. The result is a considerable backlog in the number of applications awaiting decision. I estimate that at the current pace of approval, it would take 50 years to clear the buildup of applications from Mexico.

Does all this amount to “too much” chain migration, “too little,” or “just the right amount”? The answer to this question depends on perspective. Last year, the number of people living in the United States was 325,700,000. By adding 804,000 people to this count through chain migration, the US population grows by 0.25 percent annually. (That’s one-fourth of one percent. The lottery, which some policy-makers propose eliminating altogether, grows the current US population by .02 percent each year.) Chatham County is home to an estimated 69,000 people, so each year chain migration expands the larger US population by about eleven Chatham counties.

*Nora Haenn is a Chatham resident. She teaches anthropology and International Studies at North Carolina State University.*

## A Tool for the Future of Downtown Pittsboro

by Randy Voller

An overlay district for the historic downtown area that will serve as a guidepost for future development in Pittsboro’s Main Street District is in development.

The need for this tool was brought into stark focus during the recent saga regarding the “Eagles” convenience store site plan for the former Pittsboro Ford lot. This lot is at the corner of Masonic Street and East Street (Business 64), across the street from Hardees and next to the Small B&B and Cafe.

Citizens and town representatives alike were caught off guard when the owners of Eagles submitted a site plan that included a 24-hour convenience store with fast food, a gas station, and car wash.

This type of commercial development in Pittsboro’s historic downtown is possible because the property is zoned commercial C-2—a legacy zoning from before the existence of the US-64 Bypass. The 64 Bypass north of town currently

serves the traffic that Business 64 served for decades.

On April 23, 2018, many citizens cheered loudly online and in person when the Town Board voted to reject the Eagles owners’ site plan. The rejection was based on a technical failure of the plan itself.

For many years, the Town of Pittsboro has been studying, implementing, and passing transit plans, pedestrian plans, greenway plans, and land use plans as well as a Downtown Vision Plan. However, a key component known as the Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) has lagged which is why the Town lacks certain land use protections that its citizens and many businesses want for the area in and around downtown Pittsboro.

Main Street Pittsboro and Town leaders have been keenly aware of this situation, which is why the Town embarked upon a process to address the situation with an overlay district.

**TOOL** CONTINUED, PAGE 2



FILE PHOTO, JULIAN SERENO

## Time for Environmentalists to Step Up

by Joe Jacob

Besides the fact that both the Haw River’s Cape Fear Shiner and the Mississippi Sandhill Crane are both federally designated as endangered species, what other things do they have in common? For one thing, extinction due to the loss of habitat. The crane almost went extinct. Is that the fate of the shiner?

I first became aware of the connection between habitat loss and the plight of an endangered species in the mid-1970s while working and studying at a marine laboratory in Ocean Springs, MS. At the time, I-10, the interstate highway that crosses Mississippi from Louisiana to Alabama, was being planned by the Federal Highway Administration. The initial plan called for I-10 to go right through wet pine savannah which

is habitat for the Mississippi Sandhill Crane, a non-migratory species related to the migratory Greater and Lesser Sandhill Cranes. The FHA could have routed I-10 farther north to avoid the wetlands, but political pressure from Mississippi’s powerful U.S. Senators brought pressure to bare. Seems a local county commissioner of the same political party owned a lot of the surrounding land and stood to gain from interchanges that would dump traffic off into the slowly developing region.

The crane’s habitat would have been destroyed by draining the wetlands and turning the surrounding land into subdivisions had it not been for the National Wildlife Federation suing the FHA. At the time, the Endangered Species Act had never been tested. In order to sue, the National Wildlife Federation had to show it had standing in court; i.e., one of its members

who was also a member of its state affiliate would be injured by the destruction of the wet pine savannah habitat which would lead to the extinction of the non-migratory Mississippi Sandhill Crane. Turns out, I was one of three people who met the membership criteria and the only one willing to be involved in the suit.

As a young idealistic person, I felt obligated to our society for the freedom and opportunity to improve myself with higher education. Isn’t it what our society wanted, needed, a professionally trained biologist to explain how the interstate highway would lead to the extinction of the species? I was the first person called to the stand. The federal attorney began questioning

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