



# ***Rodney's Take***

November 27, 2023

## **The Answer in the Magic Eye**

I never got Magic Eye, the optical illusion posters that were so popular in the 90s. If you looked at one from the correct angle and distance, the squiggly lines would mesh into a discernible object or person. Not for me. No matter how long I looked at them, they remained a bunch of lines.

Other people could see the hidden images and describe them in great detail. It's as if they had unlocked a door and the answer was obvious every time they looked at the poster.

As a nation, we're staring at what amounts to an economic Magic Eye poster, with millions of people pursuing their individual goals. If we stand too close, all we see are the problems, but if we widen the lens, the answer comes into focus. Domestically, American women of fertility age now have 1.67 children each on average, far below the 2.1 children per woman required to keep the population from declining. Other than Romania, which outlawed contraception and abortion (it ended badly), no country has figured out how to induce its population to have more children. Chances are that the U.S. won't fare any better.

On the other side of the population equation, illegal immigrants are pouring across our southern border. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) encountered 2.7 million illegal immigrants in fiscal year 2022 (ending September 30), and more than 2.8 million illegal immigrants in fiscal year 2023. Many immigrants bring children. CBS News reported that the CBP

took 170,000 minors into custody in fiscal 2022, which doesn't count the unknown number of minors (and adults) who were not caught. The flow of illegal immigrants slowed markedly when President Biden's quick deportation program started, but then shot higher when the immigrants realized that CBP didn't have enough detention space to process all of them.

To top it off, our unemployment rate sits under 4%, with the lowest rung of jobs the hardest to fill.

If Americans aren't having enough children to keep our population steady, millions of people want to migrate to the U.S., and migrants are willing to brave difficult situations to reach our borders, you'd think that even I would see the Magic Eye solution. Congress must overhaul the migration laws and programs.

As New York City Mayor Eric Adams recently realized, when you call Washington about migration, you get radio silence from Congress. Both sides stick to talking points that have zero chance of becoming law, which leaves cities and states to go it alone. That's not leadership, it's either being too cowardly to tackle the issue or reflects a heartless desire to leave it unresolved for political gain.

Make no mistake; congress members often put forth bipartisan immigration proposals, but leaders on committees and at the top—the speaker of the house and the senate majority leader—make sure that the proposals never see the light of day. The gridlock must serve their interests, or they would solve the problem.

While I can see the big-picture resolution as if it were a Magic Eye poster (matching up declining domestic child-bearing and low unemployment with immigration), I also can see a looming problem. In 2021, Gallup polled the populations of the 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. Of the 450 million who live in those countries, 27%, or 120 million people, want to migrate. When asked where they would go, 35%, or 42 million people, said to the U.S. Whether we reform our immigration system or not, migrants will

congregate at our border. Responding to the humanitarian crisis hasn't worked for three decades. Perhaps it's time we take a proactive approach, if we can get our elected officials to do their jobs.

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*Got a question or comment? You can contact us at [info@hsdent.com](mailto:info@hsdent.com)*