

## letters

# Immigrants don't feel welcome in GOP 'tent'

I find it somewhat ironic that an officer of the California Republican Party would cite the party's early history to rebuff recent claims that the GOP is currently anti-immigrant and socially intolerant.

In a letter published June 5 in the Community Forum, California Republican Party Treasurer Shawn Steel asserted that the Republican Party was founded to combat slavery.

Further, the letter asserted that Democrats at the time favored slavery.

Both assertions are dubious at best.

Charles Sumner, the abolitionist who was physically assaulted by Rep. Preston S. Brooks after his famous "The Crime Against Kansas" speech, was elected to the U.S. Senate in 1851 on a Democratic/Free-Soiler ticket.

Sumner differed with many of his fellow Democrats not on whether slavery was moral, but on whether the issue was a state or federal one.

At that point, the Democratic Party was still largely true to its founding principal of a small federal government being the best way to

ensure maximum personal liberty.

In other words, the mainstream Democratic stance on slavery was almost identical to the mainstream Republican stance on segregation a century later — the practice, though reprehensible, was an issue for each state to decide individually.

The early Republican Party was an alliance of several different factions with common goals. The party did oppose the extension of slavery into the territories, but for varying reasons.

Some party members were morally motivated, but others were concerned only with economics.

Case in point would be Republican President Abraham Lincoln. Inarguably, Lincoln was one of our greatest presidents. Still, his own letters show he was largely a product of his time.

Lincoln repeatedly referred to "Negroes" as the "vile race" whom he held responsible for "this wretched war."

Lincoln also resisted emancipation until it

became, in his words, "an unavoidable political necessity."

Despite the many changes in both major political parties over the last century, the uneasy alliance of moral and economic factions in the early Republican Party is hauntingly familiar to the situation facing the same party today.

If polls are to be trusted, many immigrants are fiscally conservative, socially moderate, and distrustful of government. In theory, people with such views should be good potential recruits for the Republican Party.

However, when Pat Buchanan is given a standing ovation for a speech that contains phrases such as "build a wall" and "preserve our cultural integrity" at one Republican national convention, and Colin Powell receives loud boos for voicing certain social beliefs at the next, it is easy to see why many immigrants do not feel welcome in the Republican 'tent.'

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73 • LETTERS: 425 W. BROADWAY, SUITE 300, GLENDALE, CA 91204; E-MAIL TO [GNP@EARTHLINK.NET](mailto:GNP@EARTHLINK.NET)