

# Immigration Is Critical For The U.S. To Thrive

By jerry pacheco • Feb 8, 2021



Commentary: Three major entrepreneurs are using their influence and having a huge impact in the southwestern U.S. The first two are household names, while the third is relatively unknown to most Americans. All three provide a clear example of why the U.S. immigration system, and the way that visas are issued, need to be overhauled. The U.S., five percent of the world's population, needs to again become a magnet for talent around that world that can help grow this country's economy.

The first entrepreneur is Jeff Bezos, founder and CEO of Amazon. Until very recently, Bezos was the wealthiest man on earth, having since been passed by Elon Musk. Jeffery Jorgenson was born in Albuquerque, New Mexico to a 17-year-old mother who split with Jeffrey's biological father. She then married Cuban immigrant Miguel Bezos when Jeffrey was four years old. Upon marriage, Bezos adopted little Jeffrey whose common name is Jeff Bezos today. Through Amazon, he has revolutionized online retailing and changed the way Americans shop. Recently, Amazon announced huge distribution center projects in Albuquerque and El Paso.

Bezos also extended his business empire in several other areas. One of his interests is space vehicle development. In 2000, he founded Blue Origin, whose objective is to make space travel more accessible and economical by developing reusable launch vehicles. Blue Origin has established a suborbital launch site just north of Van Horn, Texas. His space vehicles are currently being tested and are expected to revolutionize space travel much as Amazon has done in retail. Last year, Blue Origin, in conjunction with Draper, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman, was awarded by NASA almost \$600 million to develop a moon landing unit. Through these efforts, humans may again walk on the moon within the decade.

While Bezos is American born, his adopted father immigrated to the U.S. to go to school at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, earning a degree in engineering. He eventually became a naturalized citizen and an engineer for Exxon. Apart from his contribution to the petroleum industry, Miguel Bezo's influence on his adopted son is immeasurable.

British-born Sir Richard Branson comes from a family of entrepreneurs. When he was a child, his mother would craft products that she would sell to make money for the family. As a young man, Branson founded a mail-order business that would sell vinyl records throughout the U.K. He later founded Virgin Records, which eventually signed artists such as the Rolling Stones, Genesis, Lenny Kravitz, and the Spice Girls.

Branson became a billionaire, and with his interest in flight, founded Virgin Atlantic in 1984, and Virgin Galactic, a British-American company, in 2004. The latter company's objective is to develop spacecraft, thus allowing commercial space flight to become a reality. It already has a long list of eager, commercial space tourists who are waiting for the company to begin suborbital flights. Virgin Galactic has its space fleet at Spaceport America in southern New Mexico. Branson has invested heavily in his company's operations at this spaceport and expects to launch his initial commercial

flights very soon.

While he is not an American citizen, Branson travels extensively to the U.S. to work in his companies and to grow his investments. He does this by having a business visa that allows him to do so. Without having the ease to travel within the U.S., it is unlikely that Branson would have invested so much of his \$4.1 billion dollar wealth in this country.

Bezos and Branson are household names. Noubar Afeyan is not, but it is probable that he is having a larger impact than the former at this particular time in history. Afeyan is an Armenian, who was born in Lebanon, but whose family had to flee to Canada from that country's civil war in 1975. He eventually came to the U.S. to receive his Ph. D in biochemical engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Immediately after having received his doctorate, Afeyan founded his first biotechnology company. Later he formed Flagship Pioneering, a major venture capital firm that invests in biotechnology. To date, Afeyan has participated in the founding of more than 41 new start-ups, and more than 500 patents. Personally, he is responsible for more than 100 patents.

In 2009, Afeyan founded Moderna, a biotechnology and pharmaceutical company. He currently serves at this company's CEO, as it produces the precious vaccine that is helping vaccinate people around the world against the

deadly COVID-19 virus. Imagine a boy from the war-torn Middle East, whose family had to flee for their lives, becoming a superhero who is literally saving the world. He is an example of talented foreigners who come to the U.S. to obtain their higher education, and eventually become productive elements of the U.S. economy.

In order for the U.S. to remain competitive and to develop cutting-edge technologies and industries, we must use local and foreign talent, which must be recruited and welcomed. This effort is hampered if we don't fix the outdated way we grant visas, especially to talent who want to work and invest in this country.