

DAILY BEAST

DeSantis' Migrant Stunt Is Kidnapping by Another Name

The outrage isn't over immigrants entering a liberal community, it's that they were reportedly lured under false promises of jobs and housing.

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Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis flew about 50 Venezuelan immigrants from Texas to Martha's Vineyard on Wednesday night, as part of a Republican effort to expose—in the words of Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX)—liberal “hypocrisy” for (supposedly) supporting pro-immigrant border policies but (supposedly) being outraged over the immigrants coming to *their* communities.

But Sen. Cruz is wrong. There's no outrage over helping these people.

The outrage is over the fraud used to trick these vulnerable people into the political stunt. A woman presumably hired by the state of Florida reportedly lured the immigrants onto the plane with free food and promises that they would get “expedited work papers” when they arrived. They were also told ample housing and jobs awaited them on the small island.

This was a crime perpetrated on some of the most vulnerable people in this country.

This isn't a legal analysis, but kidnapping is really the only word that works to describe it. The state used deception to transport someone to a place they wouldn't otherwise go for the purpose of harming them and depriving them of the ability to move freely (especially to Florida).

Beyond the deception, the intent to injure the immigrants is further confirmed by the fact that though he apparently tipped off Fox News, Gov. DeSantis intentionally gave the little town no advance notice about the flight. Clearly, the plan was to trick the immigrants into leaving their shelter in Texas and strand them on the island homeless, jobless, and starving.

Gov. DeSantis might think he's standing up for America's laws, but he's not.

The immigrants were defrauded and victimized, and when there's a victim, there's a crime, and when there's a crime, there's a criminal—and if there is a crime, someone needs to investigate who is responsible. A crime is enough reason to be outraged, but a crime funded by taxpayers is far worse.

Of course, once the town found out about the situation, volunteers and donations poured in. Contrary to Sen. Cruz's assertion, people welcomed the immigrants into their homes and churches. DeSantis actually claimed he sent the immigrants to Massachusetts because people there want to help immigrants, while his state does not. The governor wants Florida—that more than 4 million immigrants call home—to be far more anti-immigrant than it is.

Yet, the only way he can accomplish this is to use taxpayer dollars to make it happen. Because the reality is that Americans in every single state would step up to help immigrants on their own, without a government mandate, when they are free to do so.

This fact shows the real crisis in immigration law: Americans have the will and desire to make immigration humane and orderly, but there is no legal way for them to do so *before* immigrants arrive at the border. The result is chaos—something this stunt is making worse—but it's a chaos that is ultimately created by Congress and the administration's unwillingness to fix the law.

The Ukrainian crisis has proved that Americans will quickly step up in large numbers to support immigrants in need before they arrive. In just a few months, Americans financially sponsored nearly 125,000 Ukrainians—including 8,300 in Florida—for status in the United States. They could then fly legally to the United States without crossing the border illegally. But that option doesn't exist for Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, or anyone else.

It's not just individuals who would want to sponsor these people. U.S. employers have over 11 million job openings—mostly in jobs not requiring a college degree. They would be happy to sponsor the immigrants, but there's no legal way to hire workers for those types unless they are temporary or seasonal. Permanent jobs at dairies, livestock, poultry processing, trucking, and other industries facing severe shortages can't hire foreign workers legally.

With all the labor demand, Martha's Vineyard certainly won't need to support these immigrants for long. They will make their way off the island, and very soon they will start contributing to this country. They will shake off this attempted sabotage, and most will soon find their way to the American Dream—just like most of the 100 million immigrants who have come to the United States before them.

Perhaps DeSantis' greatest offense would be not appreciating that.

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