

EL HISPANIC NEWS

U.S. may force Central American crime victims to return

By Richard Jones
September 4, 2014

If you found yourself driving northbound on Route 45 in downtown Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, you will likely find all three lanes packed for the next a half mile. Cars, bicycles and pedestrians all wish to cross the bridge over the Rio Bravo and on to the city of El Paso, Texas.

The reason for the delay? Some North Americans returning from an hour for lunch — or a week in Mexico. Then some people from Ciudad Juárez locals wish to shop — or work — in El Paso. They, too, must use this crossing. Others hope they can elude the assorted border agents and find jobs in the interior of the United States.

Some people along the border between Texas and Chihuahua wish to get out of the cross-fire warfare between rival drug warriors. Rights Watch estimated that more than 60,000 Mexicans were killed between 2006 and 2012.

Central American families — or just lone minors — come north hoping to escape being shot down. The United Nations estimates that Honduras, with a murder rate at 90.4 deaths per 100,000 people, rate has the highest rate of murders in the world. Young women hope to avoid being forced into prostitution.

Multiply the number crossings at El Paso by a dozen similar inspection stations in California, Arizona and Texas (New Mexico's small international station serves mainly is tiny in comparison) and you have a huge number of people fleeing from Mexico or Central America to the relative safety of the U.S.

With these terrors evident, the U.S. government aims to reduce, if not shut down, all “illegal immigration” along the 700 miles long border between the U.S. and Mexico.

Even with additional soldiers and agents placed at the border the numbers have not decreased significantly. Customs agents search tourists to see what they bought in Mexico. Other agents inspect 18 wheelers to see if their wagons are carrying what their papers claim. Narcotics agents and their dogs sniff the baggage of suspicious looking travelers. Then comes those Mexican citizens authorized to tread in the U.S.

Can the agents do much more? They can make quick scans, arrest a few offenders, and let the rest go their way.

That provides some insights to explanation why thousands of “illegal aliens” find their way northward for jobs for adults and safe homes for their children.

Republicans suggest that President Barack Obama should secure the border before addressing the main problems. Perhaps Republicans — and Democrats too — might try crossing the border between Ciudad Juárez and El Paso to help them devise a coherent plan for

securing the borders.

Blame it on the other guy

Despite the belief of some U.S. residents, very few, if any, Latinos come to get welfare. Any grape vine grower, nursery plant owner or restaurant manager will have tales about the unbelievable energy chicanos expend in jobs anglos refuse to accept.

North Americans workers tend to see matters differently. They tend to fear that Latinos will take their jobs.

A lengthy study by The Cato Institute demonstrated that communities with workers from other countries usually enjoy improved economic conditions.

More recently, Walter Ewing, writing in “Economics, Employment, Myths ...” showed that the fear of job-stealing is generally unfounded. Some unemployed Tennessee workers, Ewing said, felt that immigrants had taken their jobs.

“Not so,” replied Ewing responded. “For one reason immigrants usually go where jobs are.” Moreover, he noted, “... immigrants and native born workers tend to have different levels of education and different skill sets ...”

In short, Ewing reasoned people cannot “be swapped like batteries ...”

On the evening of Friday, August 1, the House of Representatives pushed to finish up and take their August vacation. Rep. Raul Labrador (R-ID) said Congress should end programs that encourage [Central American] children to cross the border.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez (D-IL) retorted, “Only cowards scape-goat children and only those who are ashamed of themselves do it after hours on Friday night.”

A tip from history

Honduran President Juan Hernandez told Reuters and the Associated Press reporters that he blamed the U.S. drug policy for sparking violence and driving a surge of migration to the U.S.

Hernandez might have subtly noted the parallel between the current drug war to the alcohol Prohibition that reigned in the United States from 1919 to 1933. Crime “families” and corrupt cops were the hallmarks of Prohibition. As in Prohibition, the number of killings in Central America have grown greatly.

Drug businesses in Latin America simply supply what the North American addicts are willing to spend to feed their habits. Then Congress’ artificially high prices for drugs encourages gangsters to provide drugs for junkies. In short, President Hernandez suggested that Congress encourages what it decries.

When the U.S. outlaws drugs, the price of “junk” grows higher and provides huge profits which, in turn, attracts more dealers to fight other gangs with the most lethal weapons on the market.

And how involved in drugs is Honduras? According to the U.S. State Department, 42 percent of all cocaine headed to the U.S. goes through Honduras. Moreover, about 90 percent of all cocaine flown into the U.S. goes through Honduras.

The role of women with children

Central American women with immigrant children in tow receive a more-or-less sympathetic reception in the U.S. Still they do not receive a totally warm welcome.

In an article by Pulitzer Prize winner Julia Preston, she wrote, “The Obama administration has shifted sharply to a strategy of deterrence, moving families to isolated facilities and placing them on a fast track for deportation ...”

On the other hand, U.S. law says if agents cannot find a minor’s relatives in three days, the agents must place them in a refugee center such as those in Artesia in southeastern New Mexico or Karnes City, about 40 miles east of San Antonio.

The picture that the PBS news hour suggested that life at the former FederalLawEnforcementTrainingCenter — FLEETC — presented this holding tank as a pleasant, air-conditioned building with clean walls and stacks of clothes and toys. However, none of the 700 or so Guatemalan, Honduran and Salvadoran women and children appeared on that PBS film.

However, Megan Jordi described FLETC in much grimmer terms. “Make no mistake,” she said, “FLETC is a jail.”

“Mothers report their children are not getting adequate medical attention or any mental health services for the trauma they experienced at home,” she reported.

Jordi is the legal director at the New MexicoImmigrationLawCenter.

PBS opened their microphones to some Artesia residents. Some wanted to send all immigrants to their home. Others felt that the U.S. should allow some migrants to become U.S. citizens.

A closing shot showed that some Artesia residents had donated a moderate number of gifts for the FLETC residents.

Tolerance for children

If many U.S. citizens hesitate to allow adults to become citizens, they showed a fair degree of warmth for boys and girls whose parents had been killed in gang violence.

In Atlanta, Mayor Kasim Reed said, “I would welcome the unaccompanied minors in the city of Atlanta.”

At the state level, Georgia’s Republican Governor Nathan Deal issued a statement saying his state will show compassion to children. His example featured a two-year old whose parents had been killed in gun violence. The child’s grandparents — already U.S. citizens — flew south to rescue the child.

Deal said he hoped “... the courts can quickly decide who needs to be returned to their families in their home countries.”

Other officials from Colorado, Iowa and South Carolina endorsed one program or another to help children.

Steve Benjamin, mayor of Columbia, South Carolina, said, “I believe we have a duty to protect our children and provide for them ... regardless of where he or she was born.”

Taking it to court

A court case set to start on Sept. 3, will bring the question of providing legal representation for thousands of immigrant children with representation. Ben Johnson, executive director of Fifty for Fairness, calls “the government’s failure to provide legal representation to children deprives them of a fair hearing and violates both the U.S. Constitution and the immigration laws.”

The American Immigration Council exists to ensure that immigration agencies do not lose sight of the human toll or their inactions and that our nation’s moral and ethical values are reflected in the way we treat immigrants.” The council also supports the Fifty for Fairness movement.

Johnson says immigrant children are being funneled through the complex immigration court system without representation.

A chart of Fifty for Fairness shows that in 2007 a study by the OregonCenter for Public Policy estimated that undocumented immigrants in Oregon pay state income, excise,

and property taxes. Moreover they also pay federal Social Security and Medicare taxes, which “total about \$134 million to 187 million dollars annually.” In addition, “taxes paid by Oregon employers on behalf of undocumented workers totals about \$97 million to \$136 million annually.” This comes to about \$40,000 from the pockets of undocumented workers.

The report notes that undocumented workers are not eligible for the Oregon Health Plan, food stamps, or temporary cash assistance.

Lady Liberty’s last call?

A group of young men in Artesia, N.M., got their word in on the August 11 PBS program. They said the United States had let enough people into the country and there was no more room for any more.

The Statue of Liberty, they felt, is now out of date. For them, your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, can knock on someone else’s door.