

## The 9 Worst Anti-Immigrant Measures by Hypocrite Latin American Governments

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President Donald Trump's confirmation that he will keep his campaign promise and build a wall along the Mexican border has outraged the Latin American ruling classes. Mexico's former president Vicente Fox eloquently wrote on his Twitter account that his country "is not going to pay for that f\*\*\*ing wall."

The Latin American media has echoed Fox's sentiments in an attempt to ignite regionalist indignation against the US government. "Trump confirms wall and Latin America rejects him," ran a headline in Bolivian newspaper El Deber.

Behind the media's fury at Trump's concrete plans to build his "Mexican Wall" lies the assumption that any Mexican or other Latin American has an inalienable right to simply walk into the United States and settle there permanently. This doesn't just involve the search for work and opportunity, for which there are the legal mechanisms that are so often bypassed and ignored; it also involves the belief that newly arrived Latin Americans should immediately have unbridled access to US schooling, infrastructure, and even welfare despite not having paid a penny into the system from which they hope to profit.

While I personally support a passport-free global immigration system of the type that prevailed in pre-First World War Europe, I realize that Milton Friedman was absolutely correct when he said that "it is one thing to have free immigration to jobs; it is another to have free immigration to welfare." Hence the Cato Institute's sensible slogan of building "a wall around the welfare state, not around the country."

But these are merely theoretical considerations. In practice, Latin American governments' immigration policies are not only not free, but in many cases are considerably less free than US policies. In fact, some of the following nine measures taken by different Latin American regimes against Latin American immigrants are, in my view, truly cruel and inhumane, while the much derided Trump Wall appears to be designed as a mere defensive structure, à la Hadrian's Wall or the Athenian Long Walls, with a strong component of economic protectionism, which is a folly under any circumstances.

In other cases, Latin American governments' anti-immigrant measures are completely hypocritical in the face of their tacit or open demands for the United States to accept all

immigrants from the region regardless of their background. If the Latin American media were interested in rational debate, one would expect them to engage in a minimum amount of introspection and criticism toward their own governments prior to raising their *cri de coeur* of Trump Wall tempestuousness. Alas, one would expect rationality from them in vain.

## 1. The (other) Mexican Wall

In July 2014, well before Donald Trump announced his candidacy for president and launched his proposal for a wall along the Mexican border, Ferrosur, a Mexican railway company, built a wall in the southern city of Tierra Blanca, Veracruz, in order to deter immigrants from Honduras, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador from seeking refuge in Mexico. Although Tierra Blanca is not a border city, it does lie along a 3,200 kilometer-long railway line connecting Tapachula in the state of Chiapas, which is not far from Mexico's border with Guatemala, with Mexico City and, eventually, the northern border.

As the *PanAm Post* [reported](#) in 2014, thousands of Central American immigrants risk their lives each year by illegally boarding a series of freight trains that run across all of southern and central Mexico along the Tapachula-Mexico City line. The perils of the journey include falling from the undercarriage of a moving freight train onto the tracks or from the top of a moving train, where immigrants ride in order to avoid detection. Due to the high number of immigrant casualties and accidents leading to lost limbs, the freight trains have been labelled “La Bestia,” “The Beast.” Those who survive The Beast and reach the Mexican capital after a 20-day journey try to board other trains that might take them across the northern border and into the United States.

Ferrosur's wall is a kilometer long, 1.5 meter high structure topped with barbed wire. Its purpose is to prevent Central Americans arriving on The Beast from detaining in Tierra Blanca and seeking refuge in a Catholic shelter which opened in 2003 in order to provide humanitarian aid to illegal migrants. Although built by a private company, webzine [SinEmbargo](#) reports that the Tierra Blanca wall is part of Mexican President Enrique Peña Nieto's “Frontera Sur” plan, a semi-Trumpian strategy launched in 2014 to “contain the flow of (Central American) migrants into the country.” This is a fact Peña Nieto tends not to mention when he piously [claims](#) that “Mexico does not believe in walls.” What he means is that his government is against walls that keep its own citizens out of the United States, but unhesitant to build walls that keep Central Americans out of Mexico.

Loud-mouthed Vicente Fox has also avoided mentioning the Tierra Blanca wall while he offers CNN his anti-Trump tirades. For some Mexicans, however, there is need for a much more robust border wall. Last July, Mexican daily *El Mañana* published an [editorial](#) titled “Yes to the Border Wall... But in the South of Mexico.” According to the authors,

Mexico's southern borders with Guatemala and Belize bring no benefit to the country. On the contrary, they cause only problems because they serve as an invasion route for Central Americans who use our country to enter the United States...

When Central American immigrants stay in Mexico, the editorial states,

many of them do not find an honest way of earning a living and dedicate themselves to crimes including armed robbery, kidnapping, and extortion. In the worst of cases, they join organized criminal bands...

Hence, *El Mañana* claims that Mexico should join Donald Trump's efforts to build a border wall, except that it should be erected along the country's southern border so as "to stop the illegal arrival of Central Americans and to demand that foreigners entering Mexico present proper documents to the authorities."

Don't hold your breath if you hope to hear much about Mexico's draconian, anti-Central American attitudes toward immigration in the US progressive media.

## 2. Colombia refused to let Jewish WWII refugees into the country

While approximately 95,000 Jews fleeing Nazi Germany arrived in the United States between 1933 and 1939 and 137,450 European Jewish refugees settled in America between 1942 and 1952, Colombia received a mere 6,000 Jewish refugees in the 1930's and 1940's according to journalist Lina Leal. Argentina, meanwhile, welcomed 45,000 Jews during the same time period. Brazil, meanwhile, allowed 25,000 Jews to settle and Chile another 15,000.

The relatively low number of Jews who entered Colombia during the era of Nazi persecution is no coincidence since anti-semitism was a semi-official government policy. Luis López de Mesa, Minister of Education under President Alfonso López Pumarejo (1934-1938) and Minister of Foreign Affairs under President Eduardo Santos (1938-1942), the current president's great uncle, claimed that Jews "had a parasitic orientation in life" and denounced their "invertebrate custom" of engaging in "trade, usury, barter, and trickery." On the other hand, López de Mesa claimed that "Aryan" Germans were "disciplined, laborious, patriotic and... strong." This last characteristic, he claimed, was especially important for mixing the races and obtaining the results he desired. Germanic lineage, López de Mesa pontificated, was the cause of the "ordered temperament" that made the Germans great "organizers."

Due to López de Mesa's standing in high government circles, the Colombian state began to put his crackpot racist theories to practice. As a Colombian newspaper reports,

In September, 1938, the Colombian government implemented decree 1723, which was designed to hinder access to visas for Jews whom Hitler had deprived of their nationality. According to the decree, '(Colombian) diplomats will not be able to grant visas for passports of individuals who have lost their original nationality or who have no nationality without the special and concrete approval of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.'

Two months later,

the Colombian consulate in Berlin issued only six visas. In the four months prior to the decree, Colombian consulates in Germany and in another 10 European countries had issued 1,190 visas. In November, 1938, Colombia's ambassador in Berlin asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for guidelines concerning German Jews' applications for political asylum. López de Mesa responded:

‘we request that you reflect carefully on the problems that (granting asylum to Jews) could cause. An unexpected consequence could be that we end up being forced to bring them to Bogotá or to shelter them indefinitely.’

López de Mesa, of course, didn't foresee in 1938 that the seemingly invincible Germans would ultimately succumb to the Allied war effort, leaving him and his ilk on the wrong side of history when the concentration camps were liberated. Since he served as Foreign Minister during the apogee of Hitler's power, however, he did ensure that Colombia would become one of the many countries with a World War II record of which to be ashamed.

Although current Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos has apologized publicly for numerous events in which the Colombian state used violence in response to the armed insurrection's violent tactics, including the M-19 guerrilla's drug-financed and bloody attempt to take over the Supreme Court in 1985, he is yet to apologize for his great uncle's government's refusal to help thousands of Jews survive the Holocaust. Once again, don't expect that apology to come any time soon.

### **3. Mexico deports more Central Americans than the United States**

According to Mexican daily *El Universal*, Mexican authorities deported 118,000 Guatemalans, Hondurans, and Salvadoreans between January and September, 2015. During the same time period, meanwhile, the United States only deported 55,744 Central Americans.

Valdete Wilemann, a Brazilian nun in charge of a migrant help center in Honduras, told *El Universal* that “massive deportations (of Hondurans) are coming from Mexico, not the United States.” She added that Mexico “is capturing immigrants, trapping them in a sack, so to speak, placing them in a bus and kicking them out of the country.”

In July, 2016, Univisión reported that, between January and April of last year, Mexico didn't allow nine out of every 10 migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras to enter the country. According to the report, Central Americans fleeing violence in their native countries faced “an invisible wall” when attempting to enter Mexico.

Conveniently, President Peña Nieto ignores Mexico's terrible recent history in dealing with migrants from its neighbors to the south whenever he lectures the US authorities for discriminating against Mexican immigrants.

### **4. Colombia cracks down on Chinese merchants**

In May, 2016, merchants in the Bogotá commercial district of San Victorino held a protest against a supposed “invasion” of Chinese shopkeepers in their neighborhood, demanding that the Colombian government raise tariffs on textile and manufactured imports in order to protect national industries. According to one protester with a limited understanding of competition, Chinese immigrants harm Colombia by “importing goods with low tariffs and receiving additional benefits once they sell them.”

The Colombian customs authorities responded to the “threat” of cheap products for Colombian consumers by launching at least 68 operations against Chinese shopkeepers in Bogotá and

seizing some USD \$3 million worth of goods. When China's ambassador to Colombia visited San Victorino in order to speak to some of his countrymen, he had to be escorted by the police and was taunted with cries of "¡fuera chinos!" As usual, anti-trade rants go hand in hand with despicable nationalist abuse.

For his part, Bogotá City Council member Manuel Sarmiento, who hails from the left-wing Polo Democrático party, expressed his "solidarity" with Bogotá's merchants in a press release, claiming that "the Chinese takeover of (the) San Victorino commercial district is yet another blow that the free market has dealt Bogotá's economy." Sarmiento offered his support in preventing the Chinese from further damaging "national production and employment." In Colombia, one can always count on extreme leftists to advance Trump-style commercial policies. At the consumer's expense, of course.

### **5. All Ibero-American countries (except the Dominican Republic) require a visa for Cubans, leaving them at Castro's mercy**

Since Cuba is an island, the late communist autocrat Fidel Castro didn't have to build a Berlin Wall-type structure around his country in order to force people to stay against their will. Nevertheless, tens of thousands of Cubans fled any way they could, often risking their lives on rafts at high seas in an attempt to reach the coast of Florida and gain the opportunity to lead a decent life. In 1980 alone, when Castro temporarily allowed Cubans to leave for the United States, South Florida was left with a humanitarian crisis following the arrival of 125,000 refugees from Castro's communism.

Latin American leftists often claim that the "wet foot, dry foot" policy, which, pre-Obama, allowed any Cuban who reached US soil to remain in the country, was an effort to sabotage the Cuban economy since that supposed privilege only applied to migrants from Cuba. What the Castro apologists fail to mention is that, with the exception of the Dominican Republic, no Ibero-American country allows Cubans to enter its territory without a visa. Given the difficulty of obtaining visas— or the money to pay for them, for that matter— under the oppressive Castro regime, the visa requirement for Cubans severely reduces most people's chances of escaping the island.

Since Ecuador stopped requiring visas for citizens from all countries in 2008, Cubans could suddenly travel to that country visa-free. As a result, an increasing number of Cubans began flying to Quito before embarking on a northward journey by foot towards the United States. On December 1, 2015, however, the Ecuadorean government reinstated its visa requirement for Cubans in response to pressure from Costa Rica, Nicaragua and other Central American countries looking to halt the arrival of Cuban refugees in their territories.

In other words, the same governments that are now claiming to stand with Mexican migrants as they face the wrath of an evil Donald Trump didn't think twice before shutting the door on Cuban immigration to their own countries.

### **6. Ortega mobilizes the army against Cuban refugees**

Reacting to the inflow of Cubans walking into Nicaragua from Costa Rica as they headed to the United States, strongman Daniel Ortega decided not to bother with building walls to keep Latin

American migrants out of his country. Rather, Ortega, who is serving his fourth term as president after he made sure the courts banned his main rival from running in last year's elections, deployed the Nicaraguan army against Cubans trying to enter his nation's territory.

As the *PanAm Post* reported,

On Sunday, November 15, the Nicaraguan government deployed the military and police and ordered them to close down the border, preventing nearly 1,000 Cubans from continuing their travels. The migrants had entered Costa Rica the day before using special transit visas.

Despite the Nicaraguan government's best efforts, around 700 Cubans still managed to cross the border. However, nine kilometers into Nicaraguan territory, the group of migrants clashed with a small battalion of Nicaraguan security forces in anti-riot gear, who then expelled them from the country.

Needless to say, no Latin American government expressed any outrage over Ortega's anti-immigrant brutality. Ortega, meanwhile, felt that, despite mobilizing troops against defenseless Cuban migrants, he had sufficient moral standing to denounce Donald Trump for "ranting and raving against our Mexican brothers."

## **7. Corrupt Colombian officials demand bribes from Cuban refugees**

As I wrote in 2015, Cuban migrants traveling from Ecuador to the United States stated that, of all their trip's costs, the greatest amount was spent paying bribes to the Colombian authorities, whose members demanded a payoff in order to allow the refugees to pass through the country. The main Colombian media outlets didn't cover this scandal as far as I'm aware. They didn't lose a nanosecond, however, before attacking Trump for the anti-immigrant rhetoric which, as the *El Espectador* daily assured its readers, would cost the real-estate magnate the US election.

## **8. Colombian government deports Cuban refugees**

On January 1, 2014, 11 Cuban citizens arrived at the Bogotá airport from Ecuador hoping to be granted political asylum and permanently escape the Castro dictatorship. Eight days later, however, Colombia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied six of the Cubans their request; the other five didn't even try. The Colombian government claimed that, despite their fear of returning to Cuba, they could not officially apply for asylum since they had not technically entered the country but remained in an international transit zone. And why were they unable to enter the country? Because they did not have the visas which the Colombian state absurdly requires from Cubans in order to allow them in (see point # 5).

This typical example of Colombian pettifoggery was due to the Santos government's cowardly stance toward the Castro regime, which the president has cravenly appeased from the first day of his administration. His goal: to impose the disastrous results of his negotiations with the FARC guerrillas, which took place in Havana under the Castros' patronage, upon an unwilling Colombian citizenry.

## **9. Maduro deports Colombian immigrants**

In August, 2015, Venezuelan despot Nicolás Maduro deported 1,113 Colombian citizens from Venezuela. This was obviously a desperate attempt to distract Venezuelans' attention from the economic plight they suffer as a direct result of Chavista socialism.

Maduro, however, claimed that the deportation of Colombians would stop the smuggling of basic goods such as soap and toilet paper into Venezuela. In truth, such goods are severely scarce due to price controls, hyperregulation, and the general destruction of the country's production system under Chavista misrule.

The Colombian citizens forced out of their homes in Venezuela had to cross the Simón Bolívar International Bridge with as many of their belongings as they could carry before entering Red Cross refugee camps in the Colombian border city of Cúcuta.

Just this week, however, Maduro met his match in Colombia when current Vicepresident and future presidential candidate Germán Vargas Lleras told the media that Venezuelan immigrants in Colombia were to blame for a rise in crime in the Colombian city of Barranquilla. Earlier, Vargas Lleras, sensing that he could gain an electoral advantage with anti-immigrant rhetoric, had stated before a crowd of his supporters that Venezuelans would have no access to "free" housing in Colombia.

So much for free immigration between two countries with nearly indistinguishable cultures and peoples. And so much for the late Hugo Chávez's fantasies of reuniting Venezuela and Colombia in a rehash of the failed 19th century Gran Colombia experiment.