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Are Sanctuary Cities Safer?

The "sanctuary city" movement is nothing more than a pandering political charade aimed at Hispanic voters — and sanctimonious fellow leftist elites.

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My interactions with rational liberals (not always an oxymoron) provide a window into how they process “facts,” reshaping them to comport with their statist and utopian worldviews.

I had an opportunity to engage one such lefty this week — an acquaintance who’s an attorney, and who took strong exception to my characterization of so-called “sanctuary cities” as being more dangerous because they advertise immunity for illegal aliens, thus attracting more violent offenders.

Liberals, of course, become insufferably sanctimonious when advocating for things as ostensibly wonderful as a “sanctuary,” but, despite all the “warm and fuzzy feelings,” the secret among Democratic Party leaders is that the sanctuary city movement is nothing more than a pandering political charade aimed at Hispanic voters — and sanctimonious fellow leftist elites.

The previous administration’s “immigration reform strategy” was designed to fail, because otherwise it would flood the markets of their dwindling union and blue collar constituencies with cheap immigrant labor, and the former would never tolerate the latter. Instead, the policy has always been one of smoke and mirrors: placating Hispanic voters with empty promises of blanket amnesty, while never losing a constituent by fulfilling that promise.

That notwithstanding, there are now more than 500 sanctuary cities, large and small, all across the United States. That’s almost twice the number of a year ago. Not surprisingly, the growth has been driven by opposition to President Donald Trump’s commitment to enforce our nation’s immigration laws. Consequently, Trump has put those cities on notice, threatening to cut \$2.7 billion in federal funding if they refuse to abide by the law.

So, here’s how my debate with a big-hearted but light-headed lawyer began.

Last week, a friend was on his way home to our mountain community outside of Chattanooga. He stopped at a hardware store for some supplies, and when he returned to his vehicle in broad daylight, he was subjected to aggravated kidnapping (at gunpoint) and robbery. A local gang thug forced my friend into his vehicle for an “ATM joyride” — after stealing the money in his wallet, the thug forced him to drive to a nearby money machine and withdraw hundreds of dollars. My friend kept his calm, though, and was later released without bodily harm.

My friend, a physician and man of strong faith who had no option to fend off the armed assailant, told the gang member at the end of the ordeal as the offender left his car, “I will be praying for you — and this story is not over.” The gang member was later arrested, and I suspect the next chapter of this story will likely be my friend’s role in leading the offender to the transformation of God’s grace — behind bars.

But the first chapter of this story — which now occurs with alarming regularity across our country — could have ended in violence and tragedy. Indeed, most gang violence occurred *between* gang members a few years ago, but it is now metastasizing into frequent violence against citizens who have nothing to do with gangs.

According to the FBI’s most recent Uniform Crime Reports (2015), there were 1,197,704 violent crimes, up 3.9% from 2014 — a trend that started several years earlier after Barack Obama initiated his war on cops.

That violence, which is erupting across the U.S., is part of Obama’s failed legacy.

For the record, my home state of Tennessee ranks near the top of conservative states. Overall, conservative principles have put our state at the top of many lists, including economic growth and freedom indexes. Just this week, our state initiated a lawsuit against the federal government rejecting Obama’s leftover Middle Eastern migrant resettlement plans, citing violation of the Tenth Amendment as the basis of its complaint. (Yes, they are migrants, not refugees, according to the UN’s own accounting of the mass migration.)

However, our urban centers have been subject to the same social entropy and blight that afflicts other cities under Democrat “leadership.” And the most costly measure of that blight is violent crime.

Memphis is ranked #4 on the list of most dangerous cities nationwide, and now Chattanooga is moving to the top of the ratings for violent cities with populations under 200,000.

Chattanooga’s gang violence has increased significantly in the last four years under its inept and philandering Democrat mayor, Andy Berke. Despite that increase, just ahead of the recent election Berke announced his support for the faux sanctuary city parade, most assuredly giving violent crime a boost.

On that latter assertion, my lib lawyer acquaintance insisted that sanctuary cities are safer than other cities, citing a study by the leftist Annenberg Public Policy Center.

Well, not exactly. I responded that the study primarily cited crime-rate comparison by immigrants and non-immigrant populations, not *illegal* aliens.

He responded with another study from the Cato Institute on immigration and crime. But this study also primarily cited crime-rate comparison by immigrants versus non-immigrant populations, not *illegal* aliens. In fact, the Cato study concluded with this caveat: “Note on Illegal Immigration — The public focus is on the crime rates of unauthorized or illegal immigrants. The research papers above mostly include all immigrants regardless of legal status.”

Now, I would agree with research findings that *legal* immigrants are less likely to commit criminal acts than some indigenous racial or ethnic groups — particularly poor blacks and Hispanics who’ve been enslaved by generations of leftist statist policies on what amount to urban poverty plantations.

I then advised the lawyer that I wasn’t basing my conclusion about crime and sanctuary cities on political rhetoric from the either end of the spectrum but on the facts — and the fact is that in almost all declared sanctuary cities, violence is growing rapidly. For example, in 2015, in one of the nation’s largest sanctuary cities, Los Angeles, violent crime was up 19.9%: homicides up 10.2%, shootings up 12.6%, rapes up 8.6%, robberies up 12.3% and aggravated assault up 27.5%.

Of course, we have covered the explosion of violent crime in the most celebrated of sanctuary cities, Chicago, under its inept Democrat mayor, Rahm Emanuel.

But these grim statistics alone don’t prove that the increase in violence is due to criminal aliens, primarily because the Obama administration intentionally scrubbed federal criminal records of data that would identify assailants as criminal aliens versus U.S. residents. But one GAO study from 2011 did sneak through, and it indicated that the percentage of criminal aliens in U.S. prisons is disproportionate to the estimated percentage of illegal aliens in America.

However, this does prove my case: I have spoken with federal and state law enforcement command line personnel across the nation — they are my first-hand sources on illegal aliens and crime — and they consistently make two declarations about violent crime:

1. The perpetrators of 95% of violence in major sanctuary cities are associated with gangs and/or drugs networks.
2. The most violent gang and drug networks have been infiltrated by criminal aliens.

It is no coincidence that in the nation’s largest “sanctuary city,” New York, it was announced this week that 10 of the 14 members of the MS-13 gang, who were indicted for the brutal murder of two teenage girls in neighboring Suffolk County, are criminal aliens.

Finally, I asked my acquaintance to view this video message from Sacramento County Sheriff Scott Jones to Barack Obama, after two deputies, Danny Oliver and Michael Davis, were murdered by an illegal immigrant on Obama’s watch.

The deputies' widows, Jessica Davis and Susan Oliver, were in the gallery for Trump’s February address to Congress. “Their husbands,” said Trump, “were slain in the line of duty in California. They were pillars of their community. These brave men were viciously gunned down by an illegal immigrant with a criminal record and two prior deportations. Sitting with Susan is

her daughter, Jenna. Jenna, I want you to know that your father was a hero, and that tonight you have the love of an entire country supporting you and praying for you.”

Notably, a colleague who recently retired after a career in both military and federal civilian law enforcement had this suggestion for political leaders refusing to enforce our nation’s immigration laws in their jurisdictions: “Any state or local government leaders inviting illegal aliens into their ‘sanctuary cities’ should lose the qualified immunity normally granted to government officials acting under color of law, thus leaving them open to civil suits from the victims (or survivors of victims) of the violent crimes committed in those jurisdictions by illegal aliens.”

Now, removing that legal liability limitation would be a Trump executive order that would give pandering sanctuary city politicians reason to reconsider.

While there are police chiefs who oppose deportation, the basis for most of those objections (those not politically motivated to appease a mayor) is concern about the increased threat to their officers resulting from interactions with offenders who are criminal aliens.

And a final note: There is some good news on the illegal migration from south of the border. Whether you approve of Donald Trump’s border enforcement policies or not, his commitment to enforce Rule of Law has already had a dramatic effect on illegal border crossings. According to Secretary of Homeland Security John F. Kelly, in the first month of this year, “the flow of illegal border crossings as measured by apprehensions and the prevention of inadmissible persons at our southern border dropped by 40 percent.”