

THE HOUR

Stand Up Norwalk for humane treatment of migrants

Paul Cantor

July 11, 2019

Councilwoman Eloisa Melendez is to be commended for appealing to Norwalk residents to join this Friday's nationwide rally to protest the Trump administration's brutal treatment of undocumented immigrants and as Stand Up Norwalk, or SUN, has noted in the past two points are worth making in support of her appeal:

1. Undocumented immigrants are a blessing, not a threat to our welfare.
2. Past administrations in our country are largely responsible for the poverty and violence that they are fleeing.

As the Cato Institute, a conservative libertarian think tank, notes: "The overriding impact of immigrants is to strengthen and enrich American culture, increase the total output of the economy, and raise the standard of living of American citizens. Immigrants are advantageous to the United States for several reasons: (1) Since they are willing to take a chance in a new land, they are self-selected on the basis of motivation, risk taking, work ethic, and other attributes beneficial to a nation. (2) They tend to come to the United States during their prime working years (the average age is 28), and they contribute to the workforce and make huge net contributions to old-age entitlement programs, primarily Social Security. (3) Immigrants tend to fill niches in the labor market where demand is highest relative to supply, complementing rather than directly competing with American workers. (4) Many immigrants arrive with extremely high skill levels, and virtually all, regardless of skill level, bring a strong desire to work. (5) Their children tend to reach high levels of achievement in American schools and in society at large."

For example, Laura Veira, the 2016 valedictorian of Brien McMahon High School, is now a student at Harvard.

As University of California Economics Professor, Gordon H. Hanson, put it in an article entitled "The Economic Logic of Illegal Immigration:" "There is little evidence that legal immigration is economically preferable to illegal immigration. In fact, illegal immigration responds to market forces in ways that legal immigration does not."

Or as Alan Greenspan, put it to a Senate subcommittee: "There is little doubt that unauthorized, that is, illegal, immigration has made a significant contribution to the growth of our economy... Some evidence suggests that unskilled illegal immigrants (almost all from Latin America) marginally suppress wage levels of native-born Americans without a high school diploma, and impose significant costs on some state and local governments. However, the

estimated wage suppression and fiscal costs are relatively small, and economists generally view the overall economic benefits of this workforce as significantly outweighing the costs.”

Or as the Congressional Budget Office indicated in a 2007 report on “The Impact of Unauthorized Immigrants on the Budgets of State and Local Governments:” “Over the past two decades, most efforts to estimate the fiscal impact of immigration in the United States have concluded that, in aggregate and over the long term, tax revenues of all types generated by immigrants — both legal and unauthorized — exceed the cost of the services they use.”

Still people ask: Who or what is responsible for the violence and poverty in Central America that so many people are fleeing? And as “Harvest of Empire,” a documentary readily available on the web, points out the answer is to a large extent we are.

Yes, the issue of what our laws governing immigration and undocumented immigrants should be needs to be addressed. But it should be addressed with reason and compassion in order to ensure the rules we adopt reflect the humanitarian values we want to govern our country and the world. Illegal immigrants are not the drug pushers, rapists and murderers that President Trump makes them out to be. Rather as President Ronald Reagan pointed out in 1981, they are “productive members of our society and a basic part of our work force.” And as such they deserve our respect and support.

Instead the Trump administration is treating them worse than it treats hardened criminals or billionaire sexual predators. And by so doing it is simultaneously violating their human rights and undermining the enlightenment principles embodied in our constitution and other founding documents.