



Coastal Voices: Immigration debate hijacked by simplistic rage

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I don't know Roger Gitlin and I'm not one of his constituents, but I know political hypocrisy when I see it, and Gitlin's blood-on-their-hands commentary regarding California's sanctuary law is rife with it. I sympathize with the long-ago loss of his friend Deputy March, and I understand how the recent murder of Newman police officer Ronil Singh would bring back those emotions, but Gitlin's "appropriation" of facts does not lend credibility to his views.

First, there is nothing — absolutely nothing — in SB-54, the California Values Act, that prohibits or hinders the cooperation of local law enforcement with immigration authorities regarding criminals. Police can and do turn them over for deportation after conviction and sentence. As a politician himself, Gitlin should know this, and I think he probably does.

Second, the number of homicides committed by illegal immigrants since 9/11 is not even remotely "tens of thousands" — that's a phony figure published years ago by neo-Nazi favorite Rep. Steve King (R-Iowa) and widely parroted in right-wing media. (Gitlin himself has promoted this falsehood in previous writings.) In fact, according to new studies by both the conservative Cato Institute and the scientific journal *Criminology*, undocumented immigrants commit violent crimes at a far lower rate than native-born American citizens.

But third, and most offensively, Gitlin proclaims that he honors the wishes of Singh's family by not naming his suspected killer — and then immediately dishonors other victims by politicizing their deaths for his purposes. The father of Iowa murder victim Mollie Tibbitts published a column in the *Des Moines Register* about the right-wing politicians who ignored his appeal to stop making political points off her killing.

"They have instead chosen to callously distort and corrupt Mollie's tragic death to advance a cause she vehemently opposed... do not appropriate Mollie's soul in advancing views she believed were profoundly racist."

The Michigan mother of 14-year-old Justin Lee (whom Gitlin disrespects by getting his name wrong), similarly rejected immigrant-blaming, expressing only compassion for the deadly drunk driver and his family.

And it's worth noting that the U.S. national weekly *India Abroad* cited the blatant politicization of Singh's death by President Trump, whom Gitlin enthusiastically joins.

Finally, as a Tea Party denizen, Gitlin should above all respect the will of the people. California voters overwhelmingly support the state officeholders who passed SB-54, and several Republican legislators who voted against it in 2017 just lost their seats in November. Even in our

conservative area, the sanctuary principle now has widespread support — when Oregon voters massively rejected Measure 105, which would have repealed the state’s longtime sanctuary law, even bright red Curry County voted to protect our immigrant neighbors from institutionalized discrimination.

America’s immigration policy is a nuanced and complex issue that has been hijacked by the simplistic, jingoistic rage that promotes concrete walls and xenophobia. Ronald Reagan believed that immigrants bring with them “courage, ambition and the values of family, neighborhood, work, peace and freedom” — even the ones who are brought here as toddlers, overstay their visitors’ visas, or sneak in over the border. How best to deal with the issue should not be defined by the overwrought language of elected officials with extreme views.