



To Grant Asylum or Not to Grant Asylum

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I want to first congratulate those who just won political office in our local races. While a vigorous debate and policy disagreement are vital parts of any democracy, the people have spoken. I ask that we respect and support those new and reelected officials who promise to act on our behalf, regardless of party affiliation.

In addition to designating our next set of local leaders, the just-concluded midterm elections demonstrate a shift in the electorate. How political parties shift along with the voters is going to be interesting.

Expect immigration to be a dominant topic in the upcoming election cycle.

The easy way to seek political gain is to “blame, shame and claim.”

Following the fascist playbook, some political figures prefer to blame a population, i.e. immigrants and asylum seekers, for any increased crime, a loss of jobs, or a weakened economy.

The shame phase includes villainizing and belittling those who disagree with a broad blanket indictment of immigrants.

The claim phase of the fascist playbook is to announce sweeping quick fixes and “instant” remedies that, by the way, are unrealistic and will never come to pass.

It takes little imagination to recognize that “blame, shame and claim” is classic Donald Trump rhetoric.

This election cycle, Trump Republicans focused on the grievances of the so-called unfair last election, recent worldwide inflation, and the false narrative of “defunding the police.” Promoting fear of and stoking anger due to immigration seemed to take a back seat in the midterms.

Anticipate that Republicans will fall back on the old standard “immigration-crime” argument in the upcoming election cycle since these other tactics did not work.

Immigration has always been a worldwide phenomenon. The UNHCR (the U.N. refugee agency) estimates that 90 million are currently seeking sanctuary worldwide. The countries hosting the most immigrants are Turkey with 3.5 million, Jordan hosting 3 million, Poland with over 2 million (mostly Ukrainians), Uganda, Germany, Lebanon and Pakistan with each around 1.5 million.

While an estimated 2 million fly in or cross the border in the U.S. each year, Immigration and Customs Enforcement reports that only about 350,000 formally seek asylum in the U.S. annually. About half a million per year are deported and another 1 million a year seem to vanish into American society.

While Trump claims he cut illegal immigration by forced extradition, ICE reports that the Barack Obama Administration removed an estimated 1.3% of the illegal immigrant population 0.74%.

In fact, in the last year of the Trump Administration, the CATO Institute reports, "In 2020, the removal of illegal immigrants from the interior of the United States was the lowest as an absolute number and as a share of the illegal immigration population since ICE was created in 2003."

The truth is that Trump's claims of remedy and his wall never manifested.

It is our economic stability, rule of law and offering of asylum that have and will attract refugees. Unless our asylum policies change, we invite and can expect about 2 million each year to ask for safe harbor.

What are the grounds for U.S. asylum?

The Department of Homeland Security states, "An asylum claimant must demonstrate persecution based on one of the five protected grounds (race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion)."

Political instability generates lawlessness and rampant crime. A breakdown of order leads to the dissolution of the rule of law and economic peril. Thus, poverty, persecution and risk of death emanate from living in an unstable part of the world.

Earthquake and hurricane destruction of the Haitian infrastructure led to criminal gangs controlling of much of Haiti, inducing a massive wave of Haitian immigrants. Drug cartels dominating Central America triggered millions to seek safety by leaving Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. Civil wars and genocide in sub-Saharan Africa have resulted in a record number of those being granted U.S. asylum from Africa.

Right now, waves of refugees flee economic chaos and starvation in Venezuela.

"Rapists and murderers" and other immigrants from Mexico claimed by Trump-world are almost nil.

Rather than demonizing those who want to escape lawlessness, starvation, or persecution, we should examine if America is going to continue to offer protection to refugees. To offer asylum or not to offer asylum, that is the question.

If your answer is “no,” then continue to support Trump, those who promote his fascist mindset and hate speech.

If you see offering asylum as a humanitarian question, your answer must be “yes,” to keep our doors open to the vulnerable who may otherwise perish.