



Linking Illegal Immigrants with Terrorists

What part of immoral don't you understand?

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The names Antonio Javier Barragán, Manuel Asitimbay or Margarito Casillas may not mean anything to anti-immigrant complainers who abhor undocumented Hispanics and talk about the need to secure the US border with Mexico. But they mean a lot to me.

Barragán came to the US from a little town called Santa Ana Ahuatempa, in the Mexican state of Puebla, with his wife Filiberta. He was a cook at the World Trade Center restaurant Windows on the World and died when the towers collapsed on September 11, 2001.

The terrorist attacks also killed Ecuador-born Asitimbay, leaving a widow and four orphans in Brooklyn. Casillas, a 54-year-old maintenance worker from Guadalajara, was another "illegal alien" slaughtered on that fatal day.

Asociación Tepeyac, a Manhattan-based community organization, recorded 100 cases of undocumented immigrants murdered four years ago by the fanatical followers of Osama Bin Laden.

According to New York City Health Department data, close to 10 percent of the people killed in the tragedy were Hispanics: Mexicans, Colombians, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Peruvians, Cubans, Hondurans, Venezuelans, Salvadorans, Argentineans and people from Spain were among the 3,000 slain.

That's why it is disingenuous, not to mention downright immoral, to use the 9/11 tragedy as a pretext to crack down on Hispanics and promote the repatriation of the undocumented population.

All of the hijackers entered the US with visas and none crossed the so-called "Swiss-Cheese Border" illegally.

But the Minutemen, some media activists and politicians like Vernon Robinson, former city council member from Winston-Salem and republican contender for North Carolina's 13th Congressional District, keep linking terrorism with the issue of immigration. In the name of national security and principles of law, restrictionists want to deport 12 million undocumented immigrants, plus their 3 million children born in this country, who are American citizens.

"What Part of Illegal Don't You Understand?" is the motto conveyed by immigrant bashers to justify the massive expulsion of immigrants.

Congressman Patrick McHenry wrote a recent opinion piece in The Charlotte Observer entitled, "No amnesty for lawbreakers." The article rejects comprehensive immigration legislation and defends the infamous Sensenbrenner Act, which converts hard-working immigrants into felons.

McHenry forgets that many laws of this land have been unjust. In the past, women weren't allowed to vote and owning slaves was lawful. At the peak of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. wrote this chilling line from his jail cell in Alabama: "Never forget that everything Hitler did in Germany was legal." Now intolerants talk about the fate of millions of Latinos as if these human beings were cattle.

Since the beginning of May, with the backing of law, Immigration and Customs agents have raided several Latino homes in the Charlotte area. Foreigners with deportation orders for failures in their immigration processes of Temporary Protective Status and political asylum have been jailed. South American and Central American entrepreneurs and homeowners are in procedures of removal. Mothers and infants are crying tears of anguish.

I support any measures to secure the borders, but not by linking hard-working undocumented immigrants with terrorists. The only weapons Barragáns, Asitimbays and Casillases handled before dying were their pots and brooms.

Rafael Prieto Zartha is editor of the newspaper Mi Gente. To comment on this story, click on the link below.

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