



So I'm sort of sitting back and scratching my head about all the hoopla over Arizona's newly passed anti-illegal immigration bill. Sure, the law is a bit draconian, largely unenforceable, and ultimately will never trump federal law, no matter what all these newly resurrected states' rights mavens say.

For the most part, about all it's done is start another nonsensical frenzy of protests by fuzzy-headed social activists, most of whom live in places other than Arizona.

As with all issues that inspire such histrionic keening, this is to be expected.

Look, folks. It basically came down to some kind of outlet for major frustration. Someone had to do something. I don't mean any fix is a good fix nor do I mean that this law is the way to go. I mean someone had to finally respond to the sheer anger and frustration many Arizona citizens were feeling about the situation. Arizona is apparently the gateway of South America to this our good ol' promised land. Hundreds of thousands come through Arizona every year – and none of them have a green card.

So my guess is that if you own land in Arizona, and you pay taxes on that land, and you perceive that your tax dollars are swimming into the pockets of a lot of folks trespassing across your front lawn instead of into the services you expect from your government, then you might get a little chafed at the state of affairs.

Now don't get me wrong. I am not against immigration. Personally, I think anyone willing to march a thousand miles across the desert just for the chance to work all day every day for sub-minimum wages in right harsh conditions adds great value to the country. We need more folks with such a serious work ethic. In fact, I'd be willing to trade double the number of folks who are already here doing nothing – and that includes everyone from multi-generational welfare recipients to career politicians -- for those who are coming here looking for work.

But the key word is "illegal."

The Arizona law, to me, appears to be more of a state sponsored protest against illegal immigration. Anger toward huge phalanxes of undocumented, non-tax paying, largely unaccounted for individuals. People who, depending on the histrionic, Internet-fueled viewpoint you take, either reap benefits of the welfare state without paying a dime in taxes, or are totally unprotected and cruelly exploited while they're on that noble quest for life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

The basic problem, to me, is that we are not terribly serious about any of it. We scream and caterwaul as someone conjures the stereotype of the illegal unmarried girl rushing across the border before her water breaks so her baby can get all these groovy free welfare state goodies. We point fingers at the border snake gangstas sneaking across the river to sell more drugs to our children.

That's fine; stereotypes may be odious, but that's probably because they're true. They're not the norm, but they are existent. There's no question that such things happen far too often. That's another argument for another space.

But if we were really serious about stopping illegal immigration, we would apply truly draconian penalties to those who hire these people – the giant farm conglomerates, the slaughterhouses, the Washington lobbyists and garden -variety nouveau riche socialites who want house servants for free.

If we were serious about it we would tax the daylights out of money being sent out of the country, no matter how small the amount, and we would withhold foreign aid to countries who are not helping us stem the tide of their citizens entering our country illegally.

If we were serious about it we would, in fact, ask folks for their green cards more often and deport and/or jail those we find here illegally – along with those who brought them here.

We would hold up the notion that U.S. Citizenship is a truly unique and wonderful thing not because of the free goodies, but because of the noble experiment called democracy, that lovely mix of rights and responsibilities, that made chasing those goodies possible. Or to paraphrase Lord Acton, “Liberty is not the power of doing what we like, but the right to do what we ought.”

But we’re just not that serious about it.

Not really.

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