

## **Immigrants deserve to be treated with basic human dignity**

St. Petersburg Times (Florida)

April 1, 2006 Saturday, 0 South Pinellas Edition

Copyright 2006 Times Publishing Company All Rights Reserved

**Section:** EDITORIAL; Pg. 11A

**Length:** 2112 words

### **Body**

---

In reading the many anti-immigrant letters to the editor on Thursday, I am once again reminded that this country is made up of all kinds of individuals. This country was and is being built with immigrant labor.

These people pay taxes and receive very little in return. Taxation without representation - how un-American. Freedom of speech is a fundamental American right. So why are so many offended that these individuals would protest possible legislation that would make their lives even more difficult? Are we not currently fighting for the rights of Iraqi citizens? Yet we would deny the same rights to individuals in our own back yards. Fundamental human dignity should always be the standard in any civilized society.

According to one writer, immigrants from Latin America threaten the "U.S. way of life"? Which way of life is this? Freedom and liberty for all or rights and privileges for only a select few? Americans enjoy an above-average lifestyle in large part due to immigrants willing to work hard for low wages.

This country already has approximately 12-million undocumented individuals. How is granting them legalization going to overwhelm anything? Let's be realistic: Most of the anti-immigration mentality is really anti-Mexican immigration. Many undocumented individuals are here from other countries and most likely came in an airplane with a visitor's visa. Yet when borders need to be "tightened" they are referring to the Mexican border.

Low wages, hard work, mistreatment and resentment are about all many are willing to grant immigrants from Mexico. Let's not forget who truly feeds this country, so when you gripe about undocumented workers, be careful not to speak with your mouth full.

Guadalupe Lamas, Plant City

Immigration reform is crucial

The votes taken in Congress on immigration reform could be the deciding factor in the type of country the United States will be in the next 50 years. This will be the most important vote the Senate and House will make in their lifetime.

The makeup of the United States will be determined by the outcome. We cannot absorb the amount of immigrants from any one country (Mexico) proposed by the Senate and keep our nation the envy of the world.

It's time to reverse our laws and make English the official language and start to reverse the trend of cities where languages other than English are spoken and go back to English. These people came to America because of our way of life, so why do they want to maintain the language and culture of the country they left?

Immigration should be by quota, not mass invasion.

Jack Eaton, Clearwater

Immigrants deserve to be treated with basic human dignity

Elements of a solution are at hand

Re: Immigration dominates summit in Mexico, March 31.

The issue of immigration is too important for our country to allow it to be hijacked by the Republicans in the House of Representative who are exploiting people's fears and pandering for votes.

If this matter is to be resolved, President Bush must show leadership and intercede with his own party's House members to broker comprehensive legislation that finally puts us on the road to solving this chronic problem.

If Bush gave me a phone call, I'd tell him it's really not that difficult because the parts of a solution are already on the table. First, I'd accept the tough Kennedy/McCain bill as it was amended by the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill requires all undocumented aliens to pay a fine, continue working, pay all back taxes, not have a criminal record, learn English and get to the back of the line behind legal immigrants to first get a green card. Then after all conditions are continuously met for over a decade, they finally gain citizenship.

In conference, I'd add the construction of a triple fence (not double as in the House bill) and triple the patrolling of the fence (Kennedy/McCain calls only for doubling), to finally close our borders to all illegal aliens including those who may be gaining entry from the Middle East. I'd drop the "criminalization" of undocumented aliens not only because it's harsh and excessive, but because it would prevent those immigrants from coming out of the shadows to start on the long road to citizenship.

Frank Lupo, St. Petersburg

The Senate hires illegal aliens?

Re: Point man on divisive issue for the Senate.

According to your story, Sen. Mel Martinez spoke at a Senate Republican luncheon urging his colleagues to "give illegal workers a chance."

He further advised them of a Honduran woman who is illegally in this country, but that she has done a fine job working in the U.S. Senate building for the past 13 years. According to Martinez, she deserves to be rewarded by giving her legal residency. Good grief!

How well is our national security maintained in the Senate building? I thought the FBI screens government employees before employment. I am appalled to learn that the U.S. Senate has joined the farmers who allegedly must hire Mexicans to harvest tomatoes or we will not eat. Now we are hiring persons who are illegally in this country to work in the U.S. Senate building! Please do not tell me there are no citizens in Washington looking for good jobs? Has the Senate lost it?

Peter Spyers-Duran, Largo

There's work for Mexico to do

Mexican "illegals" toil in the fields at less than substandard wages and live under the harshest conditions. There is a grinding struggle for mere existence with little or no access to health care, schooling for their kids or drivers' licenses. To enjoy these privileges, the illegal literally risks his life to get here. Why?

Is life so bad and existence so bitter in Mexico that there is no other option? Mexico must do something to provide encouragement and hope for its underclass and not shift the responsibility and costs to America. More good deeds in Mexico are needed and less criticism of the "gringo."

Bert Fisher, Oldsmar

The president has failed us in Iraq

## Immigrants deserve to be treated with basic human dignity

Re: We should keep faith with the president on the Iraq war, letter, March 25.

The letter writer states that opposition to the president and his war is political and a position from the "left." When Pat Buchanan, George Will and William F. Buckley Jr., talk about an unnecessary war and failure in the conduct of the war, they are not speaking from the "left." Nor are they speaking of flawed positions from the "right." They are speaking of the failed presidency of George W. Bush and the tragic results for Iraq and America's long-term security.

As to the "liberal litany of defeatism," allow me to point out that the likely American failure and defeat in Iraq is a result of George W. Bush and his civilian administrators running roughshod over the military brass. Military leaders asked for more troops in order to seal the borders, and to provide security during the transition from dictatorship to democracy. They did not get them.

I wonder what the letter writer means by "supporting the troops." George W. Bush has not given the troops the proper vehicle armor for their mission and continues to cut veterans' benefits. And to say the opposition has no solutions is disingenuous. The U.S. position in Iraq has become so untenable that a good result may be impossible.

Failure should not be an option, but that is the option taken by the president. It is President Bush who should be keeping faith with America and the people he has let down in Iraq.

Chuck Reigle, St. Petersburg

Memo deserved more attention

Re: Memo portrays Bush poised for war months before, March 27.

Where have the Woodwards and the Bernsteins gone? Where have newspapers like the Washington Post during Watergate gone? Could it be that corporate, and predominantly right-wing America has gobbled them up? Yet the Times is owned by the Poynter Institute. So what's up with this article being on Page 3?

One would think that a memo clearly showing President Bush had a mind-set to go to war "months before" and who was determined to get his war even if he had to provoke a confrontation even if there were no WMD, would deserve front-page headlines. Doesn't this memo show that the reasons for going to war were specious and fabricated? A democracy requires active participation by its members to work. Instead we are anesthetized. Maybe if the Times and other papers kept this news on the front page it might slowly wake Americans from their slumber.

Effie Trihas, Palm Harbor

Bush met Sheehan before

Re: Looking them in the eye, letter, March 25.

Doesn't the letter writer know that the president has already met with Cindy Sheehan?

She was with him at the White House not long after her son was killed in Iraq. She seemed pleased with the meeting and the president seemed very gracious toward her and the other parents that had lost their children in the war.

It took a year or two for Sheehan to start demonstrating and asking for a meeting with him, never mentioning that that had already happened.

Cathy Singleton, St. Petersburg

A brutal Islamic tradition

Re: Christian's trial reveals gulf within Islam, March 28.

## Immigrants deserve to be treated with basic human dignity

Susan Martin opens her article with the premise that "diverse legal and ethical traditions" in Islam trump the "simplistic" practice of executing Muslim apostates. Yet the fact remains that the Islamic Hadith (Canonical Tradition) has from the seventh century until today clearly and redundantly called for the execution of murderers, adulterers, and apostates. The language may be "simplistic," but it still carries grievous consequences as attested to by the Christian convert who fell prey to the Hadith.

Theorizing over the minutiae of Islamic law is scant comfort to those who continue to hide in fear as a result of changing their faith. It remains to be seen if the human rights that accompany democracy will take hold in Afghanistan, or if they will marry democracy to sharia law only to produce a freakish hybrid - and a resounding disappointment.

Richard Scott, Clearwater

## Let Floridians be heard on gulf drilling

Almost 80-million people come to Florida every year, and they spend more than \$50-billion - more than 20 percent of our state's sales tax - during their visits. What brings these people? They come to enjoy our beautiful beaches - to boat, fish and play on our coastline.

Next week, at the request of Florida Sens. Mel Martinez and Bill Nelson, the Interior Department has finally agreed to hold one hearing in Florida on its proposed five-year drilling plan. The administration's plan, which addresses federal oil and gas policy from 2007 to 2012, would open 2-million acres in the eastern Gulf of Mexico, directly off Florida's coast, to new oil and gas drilling.

Oddly, the Interior Department has chosen the inland city of Tallahassee for its hearing and scheduled it in midday when most people are working. Is that because the last time a public hearing on offshore oil drilling was held in Pensacola, more than 1,000 people showed up?

Frustrated by the original decision not to schedule a Florida hearing, Tampa Bay congressman Jim Davis is holding his own public hearing. Good for him. It's clear to see where this is going. The White House has already redrawn seaward boundaries for the Outer Continental Shelf without any public comment. They moved a lot of federal waters off Florida's coast into Louisiana and Alabama's jurisdictions. Sixteen members of the Florida Congressional Delegation sent a letter of complaint to the Interior Department. Gov. Jeb Bush and all Florida elected officials should demand that the Interior Department hold proper hearings throughout Florida, at times when most working people can attend.

Mary Wilkerson, past president of the Gulf Beaches

Chamber of Commerce, Indian Rocks Beach

## Expressway Authority plans ahead

Re: Finish Crosstown project first, editorial, March 27.

The Tampa-Hillsborough Expressway Authority is on solid financial footing and is able to meet its obligations on the Reversible Express Lanes project. This project is 90 percent complete, scheduled to open late this summer, and within the expected budget. Considering the extensive time needed to get a road project online, we believe a wise and strategic course is to begin our work on another important project to this community.

Toward that end, the Expressway Authority is requesting \$1.5-million from the Toll Facility Revolving Trust Fund. This Trust Fund was specifically established so that toll agencies could develop new toll facilities. These dollars will be used to further develop toll roads critical to the quality of life in Tampa Bay, including the much-needed East West Road in the New Tampa area.

We sincerely believe our efforts are well conceived and serve the best interest of all of the Tampa Bay area.

Immigrants deserve to be treated with basic human dignity

Ralph Mervine, interim executive director, Tampa-Hillsborough County Expressway Authority, Tampa

## Classification

---

**Language:** ENGLISH

**Document-Type:** LETTER

**Publication-Type:** Newspaper

**Subject:** IMMIGRATION (92%); WAGES & SALARIES (89%); HISPANIC AMERICANS (89%); LEGISLATIVE BODIES (89%); IMMIGRATION LAW (89%); ILLEGAL **IMMIGRANTS** (78%); CITIZENSHIP (78%); MIGRATION ISSUES (78%); LEGISLATION (78%); TRENDS (78%); FOREIGN LABOR (78%); POLITICAL PARTIES (77%); TAXES & TAXATION (77%); US REPUBLICAN PARTY (76%); LANGUAGE & LANGUAGES (76%); PASSPORTS & VISAS (73%); WRITERS (73%); LETTERS & COMMENTS (58%); LETTERS

**Industry:** WRITERS (73%)

**Geographic:** UNITED STATES (95%); MEXICO (94%); LATIN AMERICA (79%); IRAQ (72%)

**Load-Date:** April 1, 2006

---

End of Document