

It would be better to protest in english

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Body

There's nothing like the sight of 500,000 protesters on U.S. turf, demanding rights in Spanish while waving Mexican flags, to stir Americans from their siestas. In Los Angeles, the iconic phrase may be Si se puede, but in Muncie, it's "What the . . . ?"

I suspect that convincing others of one's desire to become an American citizen would be more effective if one were to do so in English while waving an American flag.

Now before I'm accused of being biased against Latinos, let me be clear. Yo quiero a los Latinos. I could go on in Español, but when in America, I always say, do as the Americans do. Speak English. Otherwise, I'm over-the-top pro-Latino and pro-immigrant. I grew up in Florida with Cubans as my closest friends, and my stepfather is Mexican, a legal immigrant who came to this country at age 16 to attend medical school.

But like a majority of Americans who think Congress should secure our borders, I'm a fan of laws and of those who respect them.

The question of what to do with some 11 million to 20 million illegal immigrants already living and working in this country may be too problematic for mere politicians. Then again, when we talk about illegal aliens, it is useful to remind ourselves that we're also talking about human beings, hundreds of whom die each year in the process of crossing the desert into the U.S., trying to find jobs and plenty to eat.

Standing around a Washington, D.C., Metro station the other day, I watched a Latino sweeping the tiled floor. He was one of those people you barely notice, but plainly attentive to his job. I don't know if he's here legally, but I do know the floor was spotless. Is there really an involuntarily unemployed American citizen keeping warm on a street grate because this small brown man is sweeping the floor of an underground tunnel?

Before I bleed to death or start writing poetry, let me balance this romantic view of the illegal immigrant with another nugget: About 27 percent of all inmates in the federal prison system are criminal aliens, according to government figures. Then again, millions of illegals who are otherwise law-abiding people have lived here for 10 to 20 years, buying houses, attending parent-teacher meetings and giving birth to native-born Americans.

Although there seems no simple solution to such a complex issue, two nagging thoughts persist: (1) The right to protest was a gift from America's Founding Fathers to the nation's citizens, ergo, non-citizens should protest in their own countries; and (2) the purpose of the legislative branch of government is to pass laws that serve the best interests of the nation's citizens.

Which may mean, No se puede.

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