

Title:

Can Illegal Immigration Lead To Terrorism?

Word Count:

823

Summary:

As I watched the evening news, I wondered why no one else seemed to understand that our porous southern borders were open doors for Middle Eastern terrorists. Perhaps it was fresh on my own mind because I'd had a recent conversation with a Virginia Police Chief, who told me his department had been notified by Homeland Security of the potential risk. Our government had received information that Middle Eastern terrorists loyal to al-Qaeda had arrived at the conclusion that the ...

Keywords:

illegal immigration, terrorism, American Dream

Article Body:

As I watched the evening news, I wondered why no one else seemed to understand that our porous southern borders were open doors for Middle Eastern terrorists. Perhaps it was fresh on my own mind because I'd had a recent conversation with a Virginia Police Chief, who told me his department had been notified by Homeland Security of the potential risk. Our government had received information that Middle Eastern terrorists loyal to al-Qaeda had arrived at the conclusion that the average white American would not know the difference between a Middle Eastern operative and a Latino migrant worker. They could easily get into Mexico, assume Hispanic identities, and simply walk across our borders along with millions of Latinos.

Once in the United States, the terrorists could live amongst the illegal immigrant community. Of course the immigrants would know these people did not belong in their midst, but they would never report them to local law enforcement. To do so would bring the law into their community, perhaps searching house-to-house, and the illegal immigrants themselves could be arrested and deported. Instead, they would mind their own business—even if terrorist sleeper cells existed alongside them.

This information became the basis for my latest suspense, Ricochet. Sheila Carpenter, who made her debut appearance in an earlier book, Kickback, is now attending the FBI Academy at Quantico. She finds information leading her to

believe that her parents might not have died accidental deaths but were murdered. This hunch leads her on a journey where she follows her mother's footsteps in the days before she died—a journey that takes her into the heart of illegal immigration and terrorism within our own borders.

To date, there is an estimated 21 million illegal immigrants in the United States. That means there are 21 million people living amongst us that we know absolutely nothing about. We don't know their true identities, their history, their criminal records, or their intent. If only one tenth of one percent intend to harm us, that is an astounding 21,000 terrorists or criminals that could be living amongst us. In an age where an American sex offender is listed on the Internet, Americans' criminal records are made public, and Americans are tracked through a pyramid of electronic records, the illegal immigrant—or terrorist crossing our borders—has no record at all. On paper and electronically, they do not exist.

When I began writing Ricochet, I made the conscious decision not to inject my own opinions into the story. I would not judge the Hispanic illegal immigrant population, but I would instead lay out the very real threat that occurs when a country's borders are wide open. Since Ricochet was released, I have heard from many people on both sides of the issue.

I spoke to a school teacher who knew her third grade student was living under an assumed name; his mother actually had two fictitious names. The teacher was adamant and emotional about protecting "this poor family."

I spoke to an emergency room doctor who was to perform surgery on a man injured on the job; a man who could speak no English and who, it turned out, was working more than 200 hours a week. Realizing more than one person would have to be using the same identity, he refused to operate until he knew the patient's real name and true medical history—facts that saved him from medication to which he was allergic. It turned out that four people were using the same identity at the same meat processing plant.

I spoke to a landlord who rented his 1,000 square foot home to a nice, young Latino couple with an infant, only to learn that more than 70 illegal immigrants had moved in, completely destroying his home. Unable to pay for the repairs, the landlord has been forced to leave the house empty for months. He admitted the bank will probably foreclose.

I've spoken to more than one person who had their identities stolen. Though our judicial system is supposed to be founded on the principle "innocent until proven guilty" the victims of identity theft were presumed guilty of criminal

activities and poor credit, and they were forced to prove they were NOT the culprits.

While the nation is debating whether the explosion of illegal immigrants are law-abiding citizens who simply want the American dream or are criminals who are taking over whole communities, there is a different picture the average American isn't getting: the nation's security. If a poor Latino who, as some allege, simply wants to work in our country can obtain a set of illegal documents, what could a terrorist do? The World Trade Center was attacked by only a handful of people, not an entire army. As long as our borders remain porous enough to allow men, women and children to simply walk across it, what would possibly prevent a terrorist from doing the same?