



Who Is Afraid of a Hispanic Majority?

By Musafir

Hispanics, mostly Mexicans but also inclusive of people from other Spanish speaking countries, are the largest minority group in America. There is an influx of illegal immigrants into the U.S. from Mexico. Many of us seem to be uneasy about this and are concerned that Hispanics will ultimately replace Caucasians as a majority ethnic and racial group in the U.S.

If we are so afraid, why don't we choose to work as farm laborers in the potato fields of Idaho or become household servants to serve the affluent? Why don't we line up on the street corners of New Orleans to be picked up by the contractors to do grunt work? We don't do that either because either we already have a better paying job or some of us just prefer welfare to grunt work. If those jobs are taken by the Hispanics, why are we complaining?

There are estimated 12 million illegal Mexicans in the U.S. working as waiters, maids, gardeners and laborers. They are needed because market forces have created a demand for them. They are here because America and the Americans need them. The employers hire them despite the dysfunctional 1986 Simpson-Mazzoli Act which made it a crime to knowingly hire illegal immigrants. If it were not for those illegal Mexican laborers, many establishments in the U.S. would immediately shut down, giving rise to chaos.

Furthermore, the Center for Immigration Study's data shows that "the average illegal household pays more than \$4,200 a year in federal taxes, for a total of nearly \$16 billion" (Center for Immigration Studies). Illegal immigrants can pay taxes using a nine digit individual taxpayer identification number (ITIN) (Gaona, 2004). In addition, "about 43 percent, or \$7 billion, of the federal taxes that the illegal immigrants pay go to Social Security and Medicare" (Center for Immigration Studies).

The perception that the Hispanics will dilute American values and will not assimilate is wrong. The first generation Hispanics speak Spanish for the same reason other first-generation non-English speaking

immigrants speak in their own native tongues. According to research conducted by Jack Citrin, Amy Lerman, Michael Murakami (all of the University of California, Berkeley), the second generation Hispanics tend to accept English as their primary language and the third generation Hispanics only speak English.

The Hispanics are equally religious, if not more, compared to any other ethnic group living in America and "there is no evidence that they or their offspring are quicker to abandon God or country than other Americans." (Harvard scholar Samuel Huntington). Antonio Villaraigosa, the first Hispanic mayor of Los Angeles is a good example. He is an American mayor not a Hispanic mayor. His first act as mayor was requiring all city commissioners, his entire staff, and all city employees to sign an ethics pledge. In addition, he removed all lobbyists from city commissions and made it his policy to never appoint a lobbyist to a city commission any time during his term. These efforts were completed to remove what he believed to be a sense of corruption and lack of trust in city government. What is wrong with that?

More Hispanics have fought for America than any other immigrant group in recent years. Twenty thousand Hispanics took part in Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm (1990-1991). By 1997, Hispanics made up almost a third of the infantry, artillery crews and specialists deployed to Bosnia for peacekeeping operations. Hispanics have also been on the frontlines in the war on terrorism and in Afghanistan.

Hispanics have also contributed to the American music and sports scene. They have enriched our lives and have mesmerized us with their sweet melodies and vibrant rhythms. Hispanic music's wide variety is represented by artists like Jennifer Lopez, Selena, Gloria Stefan and many more.

In my personal dealing with Hispanics, I have found them to be more polite and courteous than the rest of us. If in doubt, compare the aides, porters, and other support-staff at any of the northeast American airports

with their counterparts in San Jose, San Diego or Phoenix. Visit any gas station in those cities and ask questions to the attendants. The difference will be very apparent. This is not stereotyping. These are my experiences after living in America for thirty-five years and upon dealing with both the Hispanic and the

mainstream population. It is time we made Hispanic people a part of mainstream America, and provided legal status to the twelve million illegal immigrants living in fear so that they can also receive equal treatment and achieve their American dreams like the rest of us.