

FEAR AND IGNORANCE FUEL IMMIGRATION HYSTERIA

By Nick Gier

The large influx of Hispanic immigrants has promoted *decreased* crime, violence, and drug abuse compared to trends among Arizona's existing resident populations.

--Mike Males and Daniel Macallair, Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice

Spewing out "fair and balanced" disinformation during May 2010, Fox News' Bill O'Reilly charged that Arizona's 300,000 illegal aliens have caused a crime wave that is "overwhelming, dangerous, and through the roof." O'Reilly actually used an outdated figure of 500,000, neglecting to acknowledge that the undocumented population has fallen by 200,000 during the last three years. Primarily because of the Great Recession, there are now about 1 million fewer illegal immigrants in the U.S.

Pat Buchanan also fudges figures to distort crime committed by the undocumented. Refusing to acknowledge that it is very difficult for a U.S. citizen to violate federal immigration law, Buchanan claims that Americans should be alarmed that non-citizens make up 30 percent of the federal prison population. If one includes state prisons, whose wardens hold seven times more inmates than the feds do, then the percentage of illegals imprisoned drops to 6-7 percent.

The March 2010 issue of *The American Conservative* contains an article entitled "HisPANIC: The Myth of Immigrant Crime." The author Ron Unz, software engineer who has degrees in physics from Harvard and Cambridge, concludes that Latinos "have approximately the same crime rates as whites of the same age." Illegals are significantly undercounted in the census figures that Unz uses, so Latino crime rates may be as much as 35 percent lower than non-Latino rates.

A recent analysis of Arizona's crime statistics supports Unz's conclusions. Data from the U.S. Census and the Arizona Department of Public Safety show that from 1995-2009 there were 115 fewer murders, 4,001 fewer violent crimes, and 86,483 fewer property crimes in the state. Significantly, Arizona's Latino population grew by over one million during the same period.

From 2002-2009 Latino-committed violent crime in Arizona fell by 22 percent, while the number of non-Latinos in this category went down only 15 percent. For the same period Latinos arrested for drug offenses decreased by 6 percent, while the non-Latino number increased 6 percent. O'Reilly's crime wave, caused by immigrants and drugs is a fiction—pure and simple.

Much violent crime in the border region is the result of the Mexican drug wars. Americans consume two thirds of the world's illicit drugs, and many drug lords would go out of business if it were not for America's bad habit. (Or better yet: legalize the use of most recreational drugs.) Americans use cocaine at a rate 3.5 times higher than any other industrialized country; they smoke 4 times more marijuana; and they inject 6 times more heroin into their veins.

Since 1995 non-Latino emergency room admissions for drug abuse have gone up 31 percent in Arizona hospitals, but they have gone down 49 percent for Latinos. Since 2000 the number of Arizona's non-Latinos who die of drug overdose has increased a whopping 47

percent, but the figure for Latinos has decreased by 30 percent. Since 1990 drug deaths for non-Latinos have risen to 20 per 100,000, while Latino deaths are 5 per 100,000. White Arizonans should focus on the shortcomings of their own rather, than on misperceived threats from Latinos (87 percent legal) who obey the law better than they do.

Due to the fact that all illegal workers pay into social security with every paycheck, their contributions alone have put off insolvency in the trust fund by six years. Compared to the estimated \$1 billion in fraudulent claims by some of them, undocumented employees paid at least \$120 billion into the fund in 2007. This is the calculation of Stephen C. Goss, the chief actuary of the Social Security Administration, and it is more than twice as much as previous estimates.

According to a 2007 study done by the Urban Institute, only one percent of illegal immigrant families receive welfare (5 percent of citizen families do), and the percentage of undocumented children covered by State Children's Health Insurance Program Medicaid has dropped from 36 percent in 1995 to 30 percent in 2005.

Writing at Blogcritics.org in 2006, Dave Nalle states that “after factoring in services provided, an illegal immigrant, on average during his time in the US, will contribute \$80,000 more to the government than he consumes in services.” Unscrupulous businesses also benefit because they pay this worker substandard wages and little or no benefits.

Thanks to federal intervention that put the controversial S.B. 1070 on hold, Arizona's 2.3 million Latinos (and thousands of others with brown skin) should feel some relief. I chuckled, but also despaired, when I saw that one driver had written “I'm Mexican. Arrest Me!” on his back windshield. Latinos, however, still have to contend with Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who has refused to turn over documents in a federal probe about charges that he has engaged in systematic discrimination against them.

When supporters of S.B. 1070 claim that the law was not motivated by racism, they need to explain the unsavory connections of Sen. Russell Pearce, the bill's principal sponsor. In 2006 Pearce circulated an e-mail from the neo-Nazi National Alliance, which, as the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) reports, “criticized the media for promoting multiculturalism and racial equality.”

Sen. Pearce also received help in drafting the bill from Kris Kobach, an attorney affiliated with the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), which has been on the SPLC's “hate group” list since 2007. The SPLC states that “FAIR has accepted \$1.2 million from the Pioneer Fund, a racist foundation devoted to eugenics and to proving a connection between race and intelligence.”

In the late 1950s I was the only local Anglo working in the pear orchards of the Rogue River Valley. I was an underaged lad of 14, so I was the only illegal alongside the Mexican pickers on the Bracero Program (1942-1964). Over those years 4.6 million Mexican workers came to this country (peaking in 1957 at 436,000), but at the stroke of midnight on December 31, 1964, their visas were summarily revoked. But all the fields and orchards that they had transformed with their hard labor still needed to be harvested. In 2006 the pear growers of Lake

County, California could have used hard-working local kids like me as their fruit rotted when they could not get the Mexican labor they so desperately needed.

From his experience in Texas President George Bush knew first-hand how important these workers are to the U.S. economy. His bill to offer a path to citizenship for the undocumented was savaged by right-winger in his own party. Considering the contributions that these workers have made to the economy—including the estimated \$80,000 that each of them turn back to the U.S. treasury—it would seem only fair that the \$5,000 fine that Bush’s bill would assess for their breaking the law should be waived.

Nick Gier taught philosophy at the University of Idaho for 31 years. Two principal references were Mike Males and Daniel Macallair, “Scapegoating Immigrants: Arizona’s Real Crisis Is Rooted in State Residents’ Soaring Drug Abuse,” Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice (August, 2010) at www.cjcj.org/files/Scapegoating_Immigrants.pdf; and Edward Schumacher-Matos, “How illegal immigrants are helping Social Security,” *The Washington Post* (September 3, 2010).