



IMMIGRANTS! DON'T VOTE FOR WHAT YOU FLED

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I live in Guatemala and I work throughout Latin America. And I want to speak to the millions of fortunate Hispanic immigrants living in the United States – legally or not. I have a question for you: why do you support the same policies in the U.S. that caused you to flee your home country?

The policies I'm talking about are those that lead to a bigger and bigger central government. You know only too well that the more power the government has, the more corrupt it becomes. My home country, like most other nations in Central and South America, is very poor. Fifty-four percent of the population lives in poverty, and 13 percent lives in extreme poverty. Half of all children under five are chronically malnourished. Crippling government corruption is the norm. Opening a new business can take months, even years, because of a multitude of regulations that are designed to line the pockets of bureaucrats. So, the cost is much too high for the average citizen. Quite simply, unless you're politically connected in Guatemala, you probably want to leave.

And in the last 20 years, many Guatemalans have left—or, to put it more honestly, they fled. The fortunate ones reach the United States, the freest and wealthiest nation in human history. There are at least 1 million Guatemalans living in the U.S.

Nearly every Mexican and Central and South American immigrant in the United States, whether they immigrated legally or illegally, moved or fled to the U.S. for the same reasons—economic opportunity and the freedom to shape their own lives.

In short, you came to the United States to participate in what Americans call the American Dream. But have you ever asked yourself: Why is the United States so free, so much less corrupt, and so much more affluent than any Latin American country?

The answer lies first and foremost in the unique American belief in limited government. Why? Because the smaller the government, the less the corruption. And the smaller the government, the more individual freedom and personal responsibility. And given those things, along with hard work and talent, you can accomplish your life's goals.

So back to my question: Why would you support policies that keep expanding the power of the government when they are the very policies that doomed your home countries? Is it because you think that when Democrats offer you free stuff, it means they really care about you? Do you think that when Republicans talk about enforcing immigration laws, it means they are going to send you back?

Let's be honest. You didn't come here for free stuff. You came for the economic opportunity that allows you to work and earn.

And of course a nation has an obligation to enforce its borders. Certainly every country in Central and South America does; in fact, much more so than the U.S.

Perhaps you believe that your home country is poor not because of failed socialism and corrupt big government, but because of issues unrelated to ideology – not enough natural resources, imperialism, and so on. Or, worse, you believe that the U.S. has gotten rich on the backs of poorer nations.

But these narratives are false. There are many nations blessed with abundant natural resources that are poor – and they are poor overwhelmingly because of corrupt governments and policies that destroy incentives to produce. Look at Venezuela, which has vast oil and mineral reserves, but has shortages of every basic necessity. Why? Because of socialist policies; because of those same deceiving politicians who promised to “fight for the people,” and give you free stuff.

Are you going to fall for these lies again in your adopted country?

Do you think by electing politicians who will “fight for the people,” “fight for social justice,” and raise taxes on the “one percent” who are “exploiting” the wealth of the “99 percent” that you will get ahead? In other words, will you support the same policies and vote for the same types of politicians here who made such a mess back home?

The United States became wealthy because its government stayed out of the way of its citizens. The more power you give to the government, the less power you have to control your own life. Prosperity and opportunity diminish as government grows. So why did you, like so many of my fellow Guatemalans, come to the U.S.?

Because your society was broken.

You chose to make a new life in the United States. You could have gone to another Latin American country with a similar culture and the same language as your home country. But you didn't. Because the United States is different.

Please help keep it that way.

I'm Gloria Alvarez, author of *The Populist Deception*, for Prager University