

# How the New Media Advanced Arizona's Immigration Law

BY INGER EBERHART

New Media are those innovations such as Facebook, blogging, Twitter, Examiner.com, YouTube, Ustream, podcasting, and so on, and the mobile opportunities that accompany these tools, which allow users to share through one-way or two-way relationships established virtually. Through these relationships, users can share facts, opinions, and observations.

And there is the rub.

What many observed was often not reported in the progressive Mainstream Media. This incongruence gave rise to backpack journalism. Gone is the requirement that one must be a traditionally trained journalism school graduate with a camera crew, thousands of dollars of equipment, a satellite link-up, and a fancy wardrobe. Backpack journalists were born from the perfect storm of innovative and rapidly expanding technology, the advent of advocacy reporting, the increasing cultural willingness to establish relationships beyond traditional norms, and a widening chasm between the realities of illegal immigration, and how it was covered in the Mainstream Media.

The reality of illegal immigration and life in the midst of the illegal alien influx did not jibe with the sob stories of families torn apart or the tired rhetoric about the “jobs Americans won’t do.” These backpack journalists, in need of a voice, turned to the New Media to report what was often ignored. They took the illegal immigration debate from the forums of the universities to the living rooms in the Midwest. In this par-

adigm shift, those across the country shunned the traditional, high-gloss progressive media and turned to the New Media, which more closely communicated the experiences of those whose homes and businesses had been disrupted because they were located on the southern border.

The financial, physical, emotional, and spiritual victims of unfettered immigration finally had a way to express what they were living with each day. They could directly reach their community without the filter of the Mainstream Media. As the New Media grew, the ground zero victims of illegal immigration learned that they



were not alone. Through this cutting-edge communication channel, each shared their grievances and frustrations that were previously ignored. This nouveau, unadulterated picture of illegal immigration bridged the divide between the Mainstream Media's progressive talking points.

The ability to directly interact with New Media journalists presented the audience with umpteen opportunities to engage in the debate. The two-way interaction through the New Media provided the audience with a structure to deliver feedback about the illegal immigration debate, the angle presented in the story, and even

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the reporting abilities of the journalists themselves. At the same time, there is a forgiveness granted to New Media journalists in exchange for this welcome outlet where the reader or viewer can be heard.



This vocal audience garnered the attention of legislators who would have previously considered those so ardently against illegal immigration as on the “fringes” of the debate. The former “fringe” groups with new channels of communication now represented a voting bloc. The grassroots groups galvanized by the single issue of illegal immigration can now provide stories that are backed by numbers. For instance, the statistic that approximately 17 percent of the illegal aliens arrested



**Murdered Arizona Rancher  
Robert Krentz**

by the Border Patrol, in the Tucson sector, have criminal records in the U.S.A. struck a chord with the public after rancher Robert Krentz was murdered by a suspected illegal alien trespassing on his Arizona ranch last March. This voting bloc could now actively and rapidly report a legislator’s response to their demand for secure borders and immigration law enforcement. There is a transparency provided by the New Media. This is their power.

Arizona’s SB1070 has been “in the works” for over two years. Some of the first to mention the proposed law were bloggers and other citizen journalists. Only recently, along its timeline for passage, have the Mainstream Media shed light on SB1070, although the law was crafted in response to the criminal realities of a southern border hijacked by criminals. The debate has been catapulted to the foreground of American politics, and our national discourse on race relations, culture, and what it means to be an American has dramatically changed as a result.

While groups such as the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Council of La Raza (the Race) organize to protest the enforcement of U.S. immigration laws, and Mexico signs up to support the federal government’s lawsuit against Arizona, New Media journalists provide their audience with solid information: a link to the actual law, the amicus brief from Mexico, and an analysis and comparisons to the federal law. The Mainstream Media merely repeat the talking points of progressive policy groups, while the New Media are now defending Arizona from the onslaught of accusations of racial profiling and false claims that the law interferes with federal law.

Now America watches as the New Media come to the rescue of a bill they helped create. ■