

Language and Culture Wars in the Battle over Amnesty

Where We Are Now and What We Need to Understand

BY DIANA HULL

The majority of Americans want border safety, immigration laws enforced, and power to decide how many immigrants to welcome each year. Immigrant-sending countries, particularly Mexico, still brazenly push their poorest citizen's north, while encouraging them to maintain their Mexican identity.

Yet an ongoing and hardly covert U.S. open borders policy was officially blessed in the plan promoted by George Bush, Vicente Fox, and Robert Pastor in late 2001, to convert NAFTA into a North American Union, providing for the free movement of people and trade between the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, based on the model of the European Union. After strenuous objections to this idea, President Bush and members of Congress later denied the existence of this plan.¹

Nonetheless, the successful planning for NAFTA itself had come four years earlier, after the 1986 amnesty, which was a total failure by any measure. It is a strong possibility that the failure was purposeful and that it was never intended that employer sanctions be enforced. NAFTA was certainly incompatible with any interest in border security and the employer sanctions provision in the 1986 amnesty bill.

But NAFTA and the proposed North American Union were consistent with President Bush's support of the 2005 McCain/ Kennedy bill (S. 1033), which encouraged "partnerships to establish a North American security perimeter and improve security south of Mexico,"

*while providing for no effective border control strategy for the U.S.*²

In the meantime, strong opposition to ensuring U.S. border security has been openly pushed for years, going back to at least the early 1980s, and often taking the form of bilateral commissions with the focus solely on the treatment of aliens, never the best interests of American citizens.

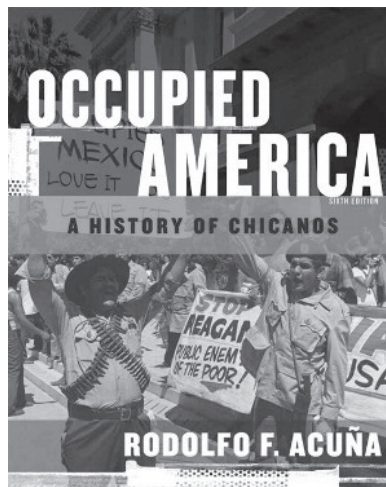
A very strong voice in this discussion of immigrant rights has been that of those who promote the widely accepted "stolen lands" theory, which tens of thousands of Chicano Studies educators from K-12 to higher education depend upon to stir up anti-American and open

borders sentiment. Rudolph Acuña's *Occupied America* has been one of Harper & Row's best-selling textbooks for years and is one of many texts giving credence to these ideas.

But Mexico, the country that benefits most from open borders via remittances and being able to export their least educated, unemployed, and most restless young, uses open borders to establish a beachhead of Mexican nationals in the U.S., where they are much more valuable than if they stayed home. Mexico's invasion of the U.S. employs appropriate tactics for a nation much weaker and less stable politically, financially, and militarily than its neighboring adversary.

By using stealth, faux friendship, and U.S. greed for cheap labor, Mexico is as determined to be an invading force in the effort to overturn, at least figuratively, the intent and purpose of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, much as Hitler was determined to overturn the territorial provisions of the Versailles Treaty.

But unlike the situation in Europe in the late 1930s and unlike the situation today, at the time California



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was Mexican territory, that country's hold on what was then an undeveloped frontier province was exceedingly "thin"³; there were approximately 20,000 Mexican nationals in all of Texas in 1832 at the time of Sam Houston's victory for Texas independence at the battle of San Jacinto.

Yet the "retaking" idea has still taken hold and been taught to young people, making the perfect subtext for open borders, supporting Mexico's claim to much of the U.S. Southwest. Keeping the border open is plainly just, it is claimed, because all of this territory was once part of Mexico.

And the places that were once Mexico include not only California, Texas, and New Mexico, but also a vast swath north to Washington State.

So the right of the U.S. to control who enters this country, especially from Mexico, has been under attack for a very long time, helped immeasurably in that virtually all of those involved in higher education have given their blessing to Chicano Studies departments and their Reconquista agenda.

The stolen land theme is even more widely accepted in Mexico itself. And the situation in many border towns testifies to an already existing *de facto* merger of the two countries, for which neither armies nor treaties were necessary.

The stolen lands theory is also why Mexican President Calderon and others before him don't even try to justify why Mexico has every right to turn back illegal aliens trying to enter Mexico from the south, but America has no such right to have the same kind of policy. In Mexico, Central and South Americans are treated very badly when caught, arrested, and promptly deported.

The U.S. also ignores that this double standard even exists, although Mexico has exactly the kind of enforcement policy the U.S. needs, but one that we would consider outrageously harsh.

Yet this difference in policy is never discussed when the Mexican government insists on good treatment for its illegal residents in the U.S. Why? Is it really impertinent to bring this up, or do U.S. policy makers also really want the flow of Mexican illegal workers to continue indefinitely?

Since the amnesty of 1986 was a failure, the word amnesty is now out of bounds and considered pejorative, mostly because the opposition to amnesty has such a large and growing constituency. To its proponents, amnesty is "forgiveness," and they don't need permission to come back to a place they believe they have every right to reclaim.

We should focus our attention instead on the truth

that supporters of the euphemistic term "comprehensive reform" actually consider open access to the U.S. their right, and that this substitute language is a route to success, by claiming their agenda has more breadth and depth than simply legalizing all the illegals already here.

The problem for us is the extent to which Americans have accepted this inoffensive sounding but meaningless phrase, "comprehensive reform." It is no more of a solution, by sounding more nuanced and sophisticated, than simply asking for an up or down vote on amnesty.

Rather it is actually a recognition by proponents of legalization that in the present climate asking for another amnesty is a non-starter for sure. And by adding the word comprehensive, there is the slightest hint that other factors like border security could stand some chance of being included. But don't count on it. With "comprehensive reform," enforcement of our laws will go the route of the 1986 employer sanctions requirement.

Even supporters of border security, like some on Fox News, seem to accept the deception that "comprehensive reform" has some positive meaning and is a possible solution to the 12 million illegals — the better estimate is 20 to 30 million — or foreign nationals, too many, it is claimed, to insist they go home. Even friendly TV commentators like Bill O'Reilly agonize endlessly about the possibility of deportation.

But even those who want to be open-minded about solutions will point out that many illegals have "American children." Unfortunately, they need to better understand the Fourteenth Amendment and its history, which is almost never discussed on TV.

The real problem with the "comprehensive reform" terminology is that it has morphed into a slogan and is now "embedded" language. It certainly sounds like something everyone should want, right? And "comprehensive reform" is so general it could be applied to thousands of issues or existing problems or policies that warrant rethinking. So the term has acquired positive "baggage."

No matter what change is being considered, it should be thorough, not inadequate, nor slipshod, right? That means "comprehensive." And any "reform" should by definition make things better, right? But better for whom?

The actual meanings of these two words "comprehensive" and "reform" are both too general and too vague. They are bland in the extreme and so unprovocative they can't offend anyone. The question is whether this artful two-word phrase is an accurate description of what is actually planned.

Unfortunately, this seemingly positive yet amorphous goal has now morphed into a topic-specific, stand-alone, positive meaning that is widely accepted.

Comprehensive reform, whatever its literal meaning, will absolutely move us in the wrong direction if passed. It actually means making legal residents of the 12 to 30 million illegal aliens now present in the U.S.

So instead let's have a clear goal, reject a purported solution absent of substance, and insist on an up or down vote on awarding or not awarding amnesty to illegal aliens. At least we will have a clear idea of what we are supporting or rejecting.

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That kind of clarity will lead to recalling the failure of our previous attempt to solve the illegal alien problem by this means and remind voters in how many ways the 1986 bill made the problem much worse.

Notice that only opponents of amnesty use the word amnesty now. Proponents have abandoned that language completely. This is because “forgiveness” for what Americans label wrongdoing is not what is sought by our opponents. Amnesty also smacks of a favor that can be granted or withheld by a dominant other, and since non-Hispanics may be a vanishing majority, it's open season on us.

You see, Americans don't have a choice about “comprehensive reform” anymore, its supporters imply, because we will soon be a voiceless minority, no matter the arguments on our side or the equities.

But there are other misunderstood deceptions, contradictions, and agendas in play. Most of Mexico's leadership has taken this same position and has encouraged and done everything in their power to made this “retaking” a fact.

They see letting illegal aliens stay forever, no matter how they came or whether we even know who they really are, as only right since Hispanics are so close

to being the dominant force in America. So now's the time to go for amnesty, by any name, and cinch the deal quickly before the next election.

We have known for years that this idea, that they, not we, are in America to stay, is taught in the schools. But it's an idea that can be enunciated in more aggressive language in street demonstrations, where Hispanic ownership of America is trumpeted and brazenly communicated via inflammatory signs, like “gringos go home.”

But is it possible that Americans are finally waking up from their longtime passivity on this issue? Have we reason to finally cheer that the passive acceptance of illegality we always hoped wasn't bred in the bones could actually be seriously challenged by Americans?

And if this is so, to what can we attribute new public recognition of immigration reality? Are Americans catching on that neither amnesty nor the meaningless phrase “comprehensive reform” does anything practical or positive for most Americans, and that nothing would make this latest push for legalizing illegals a change that would benefit anyone except illegals themselves and those that employ them?

These facts *have* been obvious to opponents of amnesty for the last two decades, but how come most Americans are just catching on and putting up a struggle now that could actually be a game changer?

Being overly righteous about obligations to those perceived to be downtrodden springs from excesses of feelgoodism for its own sake and flourishes best in the presence of satiety and guilt over abundance. But life is not as good as it was. Fear is in the air, personal and government indebtedness scary, murders and stabbings and robberies more threatening, gangs and graffiti a more common sight, and children now cannot walk to school unattended. In short, the American sense of safety at home and in the community seems gone or increasingly uncertain. So we are finally daring to ask, is welcoming the world worth the price Americans are paying for compassion? And is that price now too high? ■

Endnotes

1. Twelve U.S. States Oppose North American Union, *WorldNetDaily.com*, March 9, 2007
2. Heritage Foundation Executive Memorandum on Government Reform #975
3. George P. Hammond, editor, *The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo*, Grabhorn Press, San Francisco, February 1949, limited edition.