Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Trumpism and the Immigrants

Barbara Kraft · Wednesday, February 15th, 2017

Given the Trumpism of America's current president and his anti-immigration policies, I thought it would be appropriate to quote some thoughts on the subject by the distinguished Peruvian writer Mario Vargas Llosa – writer, politician, journalist, essayist and recipient of the 2010 Nobel Prize in Literature. I urge everyone to read Vargas Llosa's *The Immigrants* which is included in his distinguished book of essays *The Language of Passion.*

Writing in 1996, Vargas Llosa believed that the flood of immigrants could not be stopped in their search for a better life. I am quoting directly from his essay in which he states that immigrants cannot be stopped by police measures for a "very simple reason: In their home countries, the incentives for them to leave are more powerful than the obstacles put in their path to dissuade them from coming . . ."

[alert type=alert-white]Please consider making a tax-deductible donation now so we can keep publishing strong creative voices.[/alert]

He also believed that the immigrant does not usurp jobs, rather he creates them and is always a factor of progress, never decline. Vargas Llosa writes that there is no way of stopping the millions of people fleeing hunger, unemployment, oppression and violence – those who risk their lives illegally crossing borders into prosperous and peaceful countries that offer opportunities unavailable to them in their own countries.

While they are breaking the law, he wrote, that they were "exercising a natural and moral right which no legal norm or regulation should try to eliminate – the right to life, to survival, to escape the infernal existence they are condemned to by the barbarous regimes entrenched on half of the earth's surface."

Skeptical that ethical considerations and arguments for immigration fell on deaf ears, he mades= the practical case of how much the United States spends in trying to bar the 'doors of golden California and sweltering Texas to Mexicans, Guatemalans, Salvadorans, and Hondurans, "and to protect the emerald coastline of Florida from Cubans, Haitians, Colombians and Peruvians…"

As I write today, February 2017, migratory issues regarding Mexico have changed significantly since Vargas Llosa's 1996 essay. According to Alan Bersin, "the number of migrants crossing is at a 30 year low due to bipartisan work on the issue." He writes that in the past 25 years, United States government has developed a constructive relationship with Mexico that was not existent in earlier years. During the past 8-10 years, there have been continued efforts which have resulted in

improved safety and security at the border.

The major contribution, Bersin says, has been from the changing nature of migration. “Mexican migration is at a net negative,” he writes, attributing this to the fact that the Mexican people are an increasingly middle-class society and is now the 13th largest economy in the world.

Vargas Llosas writes that immigrants cannot be stopped by the police in their respective countries for the simple reason that in their home countries the incentives for them to leave outweigh the obstacles they face in emigrating. “In other words,” he writes, “there is work for them where they are headed. If there weren’t, they wouldn’t come. Immigrants are destitute but not stupid.”

Today not only are the numbers of migrants entering the United States at the lowest levels in a generation but they are now largely from Central America. Four out of five border crossers detained in South Texas are Guatemalan, Honduran or Salvadoran. They are driven, according to Bersin, by violence and poverty in their home country and by the desire for family reunification.

Citing the historian A.J.P. Taylor, Vargas Llosa notes that Taylor explained that it was “the Industrial Revolution that made England great” and would never have been possible “if Great Britain hadn’t been a country without borders at the time.”

Writing this essay in 1996, Vargas Llosa noted that Steve Forbes (the U.S. Republican candidate for president that year and again in 2000) “dared to propose the reestablishment of open borders, pure and simple, as instituted by the United States in its proudest moments.” Additionally Forbes was for free trade and health and savings accounts. He lost both bids for the presidency and returned to *Forbes* magazine as Editor-in-Chief.

In conclusion, Vargas Llosa wrote that “the most effective way for democratic countries to help poor countries is by opening trade borders, purchasing their products, stimulating exchange, and instituting an energetic policy of incentives and sanctions to further their democratization, since just as in Latin America, despotism and political authoritarianism are today the major obstacles keeping the African continent from overcoming the systematic impoverishment that has been its fate since decolonization.”

Vargas Llosa ends his essay by writing to “those who, like myself, are convinced that immigration of any color or flavor represents an injection of life, energy, and culture and that countries everywhere should consider it a blessing.”

Photo of Mario Vargas Llosa, via Presidencia Perú/Flickr

This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 15th, 2017 at 11:19 am and is filed under Fiction, Discourse
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.