

Agitate

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WALLS ARE FOR OPPRESSION, NOT PROTECTION

In 1987 President Ronald Reagan stood before the Berlin Wall, a forty year old symbol of oppression, and admonished Soviet Premier Mikail Gorbachev to, "tear down this wall." This simple statement reverberated through the cheering crowd and has come to represent the American ideal of freedom; the freedom to pursue one's best interests be it economic or political. In essence, President Reagan was promoting a basic, but unnoted freedom—the freedom of movement, to escape oppression and to live free. There he was, standing proud against a backdrop of the oppressive wall, supporting this fundamental human right.

Today, the heirs of Ronald Reagan offer platitudes of their own, standing proud against the backdrop of an American flag. Only now they are demanding the construction of a wall...and high tech surveillance, and armed guards. This wall is being built along the border of Mexico in the interests of blocking the entry of "illegal immigrants" into the United States.

Illegal immigrants. That's right! Illegal immigrants. According to the media, to the punditocracy, to the politicians on campaign these aren't poor and desperate people trying to improve their lives and the lives of their children. They are illegal immigrants. They are not courageous men and women who are willing to risk everything, including death, ([Immigrant Graveyards of South Texas](#), [altnet.org](#)) for a chance at the pursuit of happiness. No! They are illegal immigrants, and such people must be restricted from entering the country without the appropriate paperwork.

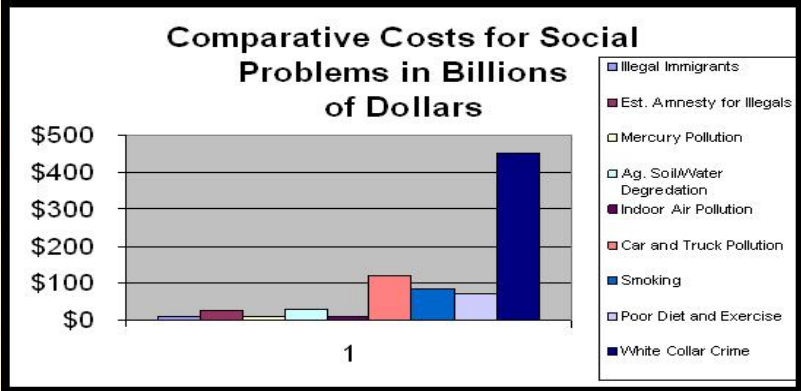
It's amazing how people must be restricted from crossing the muddy Rio Grande. Politicians wave their fingers and furrow their brows and say "No!" to poor people looking for work, people turning to America as their last and only hope. Of course, these same politicians bend over backwards to ensure that money crosses the border without restriction, trade crosses the border without restriction, American jobs cross the border without restriction. This is called free trade. Economic activity can take place across borders, even those economic policies that cost Americans their jobs and security, but not people. Trade can be "free," but not people.

Of course there's a rational argument for limiting these freedoms. There's always a rational argument. First, illegal

immigrants constitute a threat to America through crime and terrorism. Second, illegal immigrants are taking jobs from American workers. Finally, illegal immigrants constitute a financial drain on our resources because they get on our welfare and entitlement programs and send their children to our schools. Gasp! If you want to create animosity where it doesn't exist naturally, the best way to do it is to convince one group of people that they are in danger from another group of people, without regard to the truth of the threat.

Is there a criminal element among illegal immigrants? Of course there is. But here's the rub. Any large category of people has a criminal element. Building a wall on the Mexican border to keep out the criminals makes as much sense as building a wall around Florida so Sunshine State criminals don't cross into the rest of the nation.

There are those who state that those who cross the border illegally are, in and of themselves, the criminal element. They are breaking the law simply by crossing the border without going through the proper channels...that's illegal, you know. True enough. Laws are made by human beings for their own interests. If forty-nine states passed laws making it illegal for people from Florida to cross the border without papers, then every Floridian who did so would be a criminal. Just because a law exists does not make it right. Law cannot and should not be confused with justice.



A quick analysis reveals the comparable costs of illegal immigrants. Perhaps our energies would be better served elsewhere! ([andosciasociology.net](#))

There are those who feel that Mexicans coming into the United States, legally or illegally, constitute an invasion. Mexicans are going to take over America by superiority of numbers and soon the American culture will be gone. Oh my gosh! This conjures up the image of Mexicans sitting around a table in a smoky cantina in Chihuahua planning the demise of the United States. "OK. All we gotta do is cross this dangerous desert, sneak past the border patrol and the gun wielding yahoos, find jobs cleaning houses or picking crops and soon...America will be ours! Yahahahahaha!" Please!

But Mexican labor is still taking jobs from Americans. Perhaps this is true, but it is not a significant economic drain on American labor. Immigration from Mexico has continued to rise yet the unemployment rate has decreased and increased and decreased again. (Bureau of Labor Statistics, publicagenda.org) The availability of jobs is not contingent upon immigrant labor. Employment is contingent on the decisions of corporate America to provide jobs. What is corporate America doing? Why, they're shipping jobs to other countries—freely, I might add. Downsizing and off shoring is the business climate of America. This is costing Americans their jobs.

And the cost of illegal immigrants isn't as high as the politicians would like you to believe. An analysis from the Center for Immigration Studies (CIS) estimates the cost of illegal immigrants at \$10 billion dollars a year. Yes, that's a lot of money, but compared to other things, like corporate crime, which costs the US literally hundreds of billions of dollars a year (Drutman: *LA Times* 11/4/03, andosciasociology.net), illegal immigration is really a drop in the bucket. And most of the cost of illegal immigration is due to a lack of education and training, not because they are filling up the welfare roles and emergency rooms. (CIS) Knowing this, doesn't it make sense to provide educational opportunities for illegals rather than spend between 2-8 billion dollars on a wall that won't work? (Hendries: *San Francisco Chronicle* 2/26/06, globalsecurity.org) (this estimate does not include the costs to maintain it, or the local economic and environmental costs)

Yet, we live in an age of terrorism. We simply must secure our borders! There's an elephant in the living room with regard to securing our borders. I've been on the Mexican border. I've canoed the Rio Grande. I've also paddled through the mangrove forests of South Florida and backpacked through the mountains of Montana. The United States has an awful lot of border and most of it is wilderness or water. The reality is that it is impossible to secure our borders effectively. It will most likely cost American taxpayers much more than \$10 Billion a year to build and maintain this wall along the border of Mexico, and it still won't keep people out. It makes no sense economically.

It makes no sense from a law enforcement standpoint, either. All of the major terrorist attacks in the United States have been done by natural born citizens or legal immigrants. And no major terrorist has been linked to crossing the Mexican border illegally. No major terrorist has been caught crossing the border despite claims that border patrol catch 25% of illegal crossers. (CIS, Dept of Homeland Security)

The Use of Walls

Walls are a political tool used to control populations. They are nothing more than an exercise of power and a visible indicator of oppressive policies. This was the case with the Berlin Wall. And when the Berlin Wall came down the cheering throngs of people on both sides celebrated their new found freedoms. I can envision a day when Americans and Mexicans tear down the Mexican Wall and demand the right to free movement.

Walls are also a prelude to militarism. A wall, by itself, is relatively easy to traverse. In order for a wall to be effective it must be patrolled by men with guns. There must be barbed wire, spot lights, cameras, dogs, guard-towers with machine guns...are you starting to develop an image of Stalag 17, or the notorious Russia Gulag? You should. Walls are used to confine, hide and imprison. They are a tool of oppression, not a preservation of freedom as so many politicians would like you to believe.

Economic exploitation is another motivator for building walls. Since money and trade can flow freely over the border the movement of working men and women must be controlled. If too many Mexicans leave the labor force in Mexico, then American businesses that have relocated to Mexico will face an increased demand for labor with a falling supply. Labor in Mexico will be able to demand higher pay and benefits. We can't have that.

The wall also makes it easier for American businesses to exploit Mexican labor that does manage to cross the border. Many illegals crossed the border with help from up north. Since these people are in the country illegally, and have an understandable fear of authority, they often find themselves serving in virtual slavery as domestic and agricultural labor and even pimped out in the sex trade. (US Dept. of State) Without legal status these slaves have nowhere to go for help. Building a wall can only serve to reinforce this slave/master relationship.

See this months supplement for a continuation of this discussion.

An ICE Tragedy

"Without my mom, who's going to take care of me? Who's going to take me to the doctor when I get sick?" asked seven year old Claudia Milce. At 6 am one morning agents from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) came to the Milce's home, and took Claudia's mother, Fleurina Milce, away. She was allowed one minute to say good-bye to her family. Fleurina and her husband, Erlande, are hard working, tax paying immigrant parents who have never been in trouble. Though Erlande is a US citizen, Fleurina has been living here illegally. According to Erlande, he and his wife were trying to legalize her citizenship for at least 6 years. ICE Agents had nothing to say to reporters regarding Claudia's question. Certainly they won't be the ones to take this beautiful little girl to the doctor when she gets sick. (www.fox4now.com)

