



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Caravan to America

FRESNO—It began in Honduras as a series of Facebook posts and WhatsApp conversations, as various small groups spoke of banding together for the journey north. Soon the idea developed a momentum of its own. People, fearing for their lives from crime, the government and starvation saw the notices and packed their bags within hours.

Many had considered fleeing north for a long time but lacked the thousands of dollars that guides usually charged. Safety in numbers was the only other alternative. So they started walking north. The vaguely defined caravan numbered around 7,000 when it crossed the Mexican border but has lessened to a few thousand now.

Across the political right, politicians have been screaming about a conspiracy. Donald Trump has accused the Democratic Party of bribing migrants. The Honduran ambassador to Mexico has blamed former Honduran legislator Bartolo Fuentes, whereas Vice President Mike Pence has blamed the government of Venezuela. However, this right-wing search for guilt is hopeless.

“Leave it to Donald Trump and the radical right to politicize yet another unfortunate situation,” says Michael D. Evans. “Individuals seeking asylum from the horrors in their own country should be given a fair and transparent hearing at our border.”

Irineo Mujica, director of Tijuana-based Pueblos Sin Fronteras, said, “(N)o one has the power to organize this many people. No one can engineer an exodus.” The migrants’ path has been eased by support from governments, the Roman Catholic Church, community groups and citizens.

The caravan members have heard Donald Trump’s opinion of them, and yet they continue to walk. These are people who believe there is a chance they will be shot by American military forces when they reach the border, and yet still prefer that to the prospects for survival in their home country.

An incredible number of the migrants have lost at least one family member to violence from gangs, the police, or the family member has simply disappeared without a trace. In the face of all of that, even this grueling and unrelenting march is preferable.

This is what the Republican Party does not understand. No amount of militarization at the border can stop this kind of movement. When people would rather walk into Border Guard rifles than stay in their home country, no expensive wall will keep them out.

Despite everything Trump has tried, the huddled masses still see the United States as a place where they might breathe free. The only answer is to help those who need it, protect those in danger and cooperate with other countries to try and make sure the migrants can have a safe home to return to.

The Fresno County Democratic Party urges the Trump administration to work with both parties to craft a nonpartisan solution to immigration to avoid the chaos and inhumane conditions suffered by those immigrants were separated from their children while attempting to enter the United States to request asylum.

“The strength of democracy is measured by a country’s adherence to basic principles—freedom of the press, free and fair elections, the rights of minorities and the rule of law,” says Esperanza Avalos, a Fresno-based community organizer. “Attacks on the press, minorities, voter suppression and the laws that protect these rights weakens democracy.”

Inflammatory rhetoric that divides citizens, targets minorities and ignores the rule of law threatens the security of all citizens and gives extremists, domestic or foreign, fertile ground and greater room to operate.

“We need comprehensive immigration reform, and we need it now,” notes Evans. “There must be a pathway for workers to enter this country to satisfy the needs of our labor force, and we must provide a pathway to citizenship. The benefits from the diversity of our workforce and our society are limitless.”

People have the power. Vote on Nov. 6.

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