

Marisa DeFranco: Incremental measures best way to reform our immigration system

By Marisa DeFranco

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(Second of two parts)

Full amnesty activists demand that President Barack Obama take executive action and instantly give relief from deportation to 5 million or more undocumented immigrants.

How did we get to the point where people who have broken the law are in a position to demand anything from the America?

We got here because no one is willing to tell the whole truth about the immigration mess.

The truth is that undocumented immigrants with families, for whom the full amnesty crowd so loudly cries, put themselves in their insecure position. Their predicament is one of their own creation. Though individual people have sympathetic stories, sympathy is not a proper measure for an executive order or for the passing of any law.

Whining that the Republicans have derailed immigration reform is not a basis for unilateral action either. And calling people racists, as the New York Times does to those who object to the executive order or the bogus corporate-giveaway Gang of Eight bill, saying they "embody the country's old strains of nativism," does not help the country.

Americans can be very pro-immigrant and pro-law and justice at the same time. Those of us who demand respect for our laws know that law and order ultimately protect and respect immigrants because lawlessness exacerbates the plight of immigrants as it emboldens traffickers, coyotes and so many other unsavory characters ready to pounce when they see that America's president and Congress are not serious about upholding our own laws.

Our demand for the rule of law and fundamental justice makes us not nativists; it makes us Americans.

The Gang of Eight bill was and is a terrible bill. It allows legalization of people who have up to two criminal misdemeanors. It is enough to ask the American people to forgive the transgressions of an illegal crossing or a visa overstay; it is beyond acceptable that we allow those with any criminal convictions to legalize.

The bill has no serious fines for exploitative employers, its increased fees cut out small businesses from the process, and its path to citizenship sets a terrible precedent of zero penalty for a violation of our laws that will only encourage future illegal immigration and continue the never-ending cycle of chaos.

President Obama and Congress can both honor our rich history as a nation of immigrants and ensure the security of borders and the sovereignty of our laws.

Here is what real reform looks like:

n Serious fines on employers exploiting immigrants.

n Increased border and port security.

n Path to legalization, not citizenship.

n Repeal and replace the 10-year bar to re-entry with a two-four year bar.

n Create an Essential Worker Visa similar to the current seasonal-worker visa.

A comprehensive bill will lead to failure again. Let's learn from history. Pass border security and fines on employers first. Then pass a clean legalization bill that takes citizenship off the table. Finally, pass a reform bill that creates an essential-worker visa and fixes the inefficiencies in the business and family visa categories.

If the president, Republicans and Democrats are truly serious about implementing a workable immigration system, they will take the time to get it right and leave border politics at the negotiating-room door.

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