

# VP Harris Tells Guatemalans to Stay in Their Place

Shame on Vice President Kamala Harris.

On her recent trip to Guatemala she said, "I want to be clear to folks in the region who are thinking about making that dangerous trek to the United States-Mexico border: Do not come. Do not come. I believe if you come to our border, you will be turned back."

This is what passes for sensitivity to human rights in the post-Trump era. It's the same attitude that marked not only the Trump years but also the pre-Trump era under Barack Obama, the deporter-in-chief, and Joe Biden.

Notice Harris mentioned the "dangerous trek" without acknowledging that the U.S. government is a big reason for the danger. If immigrants were welcome, they would have safe ways to travel north to the United States with their children. It's typical of government officials to create a peril and then pose as humanitarians in offering advice about safety.

What's the Biden-Harris solution to the problems that Guatemalans are trying to escape from by migrating to America? Harris promised U.S. help in reforming the government there. "The goal of our work is to help Guatemalans find hope at home," she said. Her administration has about as much chance of doing that as it has to help Americans find hope at home.

The U.S. government would have a chance to improve conditions in Guatemala and other places, but that would require doing something it has no desire to do, namely, slash its power dramatically. It could start by permitting unconditional free trade and by ending the drug war, which has ravaged Guatemala and Latin America even worse than it has the United States. Do you think Biden-Harris would entertain that truly progressive program? Me neither.

But even if that were to happen and Guatemalans became much freer and safer, many might still want to come to the United States. Yet that would be none of the U.S. government's business. Until someone has been proved to have violated someone else's rights, they should be left unmolested by the state. That's not just a right of Americans; it's a right of all persons. The right to move is a natural individual right that in itself does no harm to others as physical force does. Accepting a job that an American wanted or affecting the culture doesn't count as harm. We benefit from the countless people who have changed the culture over years and from the immigrants who have started businesses, invented products, and achieved great productivity. That some people fear change should not be allowed tilt government policy against immigrants.

All the fear-mongering about free immigration is nothing more than that: baseless attempts

to scare Americans essentially into shutting the borders. To see this, one need only consult the heroic work of Bryan Caplan of George Mason University, who demolishes every bogey about open borders in blog posts, journal articles, and graphic nonfiction. Caplan shows that fear of immigrants—about wages, culture, politics, and more—is simply irrational. He also points out how much free movement would increase the wealth of the world, as people in low-productivity countries moved to high-productivity countries like the United States. He and others have emphasized that the best global antipoverty program would be open borders.

And as I pointed out recently, a new book emphasizes that restrictions on immigrants and would-be immigrants necessarily constitute restrictions on Americans. Chandran Kukathas writes in *Immigration and Freedom*: “It is difficult to control outsiders without also controlling insiders, since insiders are all too ready and willing to hire, teach, rent to, trade with, marry, and generally associate with outsiders. Moreover, insiders and outsiders are not readily distinguishable unless there are instruments of control in place to identify one or the other.”

Telling Guatemalans or anyone else “Do not come” is no different from telling them to stay in the place where they belong. The long-suffering victims of tyranny, corruption, and government planning are properly resentful of American officials who give them such a condescending admonition.