



People wave U.S. flags during a 2006 rally in Lexington, Ky., on proposed changes to immigration policy. The immigration issue remains front and center today. GANNETT FILE PHOTO

MARQUEZ

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probably are not going to leave the country, while more people will keep coming, legally and illegally, from all over the world.

There have to be many ways that our country can benefit from contributions of those who would like to adjust their status here. A new immigration law, comprehensive and specific, is urgently needed.

Yes, I do believe that there is a possible center stance to this issue; it is not only about a "middle" ground, it is a heart position.

To have such balanced answers on the illegal immigration issue, a combination of realities and expectations is needed, a vision of present and future, a practice of justice and mercy.

PURI

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economy are different and the need to reinforce strict laws so that illegal immigrants do not become parasites on society and drain our already deteriorated economy is at hand. Those who sponsor their parents or other family members should be held responsible for their stay in this country.

But that is not what has been happening. Some of them actually go on welfare and collect SSI and get free subsidized housing by the local government and also get free medical benefits plus food stamps. They also get free WIC programs for free cheese, cereal, etc., while some of our

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rob them of their humanity, and as a result, it is much easier to speak of them as "other," or less than ourselves. In this way we can legislate against them without the pangs of guilt.

And, we must take a good, hard look at the foreign policy of the United States and how this policy has catered to the interests of multinational corporations and has led to significant increases in poverty in the southern part of the world. A clear example — but only one of hundreds — is the deleterious effects of NAFTA on corn farmers in Mexico.

While it is true that corn farmers in rural Mexico were not wealthy before NAFTA, they were able to eek out a living as their ancestors before them had done. With the dumping of tons of subsidized U.S. corn on Mexico, these farmers found themselves without any means to survive and so they had to hit the road to look for employment to provide sustenance to their families. Many of them, as I

LEE

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The Deferred Action Program for DREAMERS under President Obama's order (young adults under the age of 30 who came to the United States before the age of 16, and who have high school degrees and no criminal record) is not an amnesty, as some believe. It is merely an exercise of prosecutorial discretion by the Department of Homeland Security to not actively seek removal of this class of individuals, notwithstanding their legal deportability.

However, it does not confer or lead to permanent residence, as a more comprehensive plan like the original DREAM Act envisioned. It merely grants deferred status for a period of two years, after which individuals would presumably have to reapply, assuming the policy is still in place in the future.

This is certainly a step toward fixing what almost everybody would have to acknowledge is a broken immigration system. An even better step, however, would be to work toward another legalization program for those who may have entered the United States without inspection or fallen out of status — one in which applicants would still have to demonstrate a basis for permanent residence (or green card), whether it through family relationships or employment.

Applicants would still have to wait their place in line, and would not jump ahead of people who are playing by the rules. At the same time, though, they would have the

It is necessary to stop playing politics with the future of our nation, and the future of so many families. For example, I like President Obama's recent resolution that helps young students; I also am pleased with the U.S. Supreme Court judgments on the Arizona immigration law. Why? Because they represent a middle, working ground.

I disagree with those in Congress who push their agendas by proclaiming to be more understanding of regular people than their political opponents. This is just politics. To many promises that never are completed only serve as justification to attack each other.

Work with these crucial things in mind: Allow people to live free and productive lives in this country while creating safer borders that limit penetration, not merely of poor illegal immigrants looking for jobs and a better life, but of human traffickers, drug dealers and real terrorists.

own citizens are not "eligible" because they actually hold down a low-paying job and are told they "make too much money," when in fact, they work for minimum wage.

They are the ones who contribute, even if it's a small amount, to Social Security and Medicare. I think it is time to wake up and bring changes for the benefit of the country as a whole, and not for politicians who become extremely rich at the expense of the taxpayer.

Some people come here with the intention of staying here illegally, give birth to a child so that the government will not send them back. I believe they should all be deported regardless, without offering any special consideration.

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have found in my interactions with them as a volunteer with immigrants in Philadelphia, would much prefer to be with their families in Mexico.

We could also consider the fact that immigrants pick most of the fresh food that we eat and are paid slave wages — as documented in court cases — to do so. And, we can consider that immigrants spend most of their salary in local communities, thereby making significant contributions to small towns through sales taxes, rent and other expenditures.

So, if we want to find a middle ground, we need to be willing to move the middle so that it takes into account these considerations. We need to ask ourselves why we are not welcoming these fellow human beings into our communities and recognizing their contributions to improving the quality of our lives, rather than scapegoating them for problems that have to do with inherent injustices in society.

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opportunity to legalize their status here in the United States, instead of living on the fringes of society as a shadow citizen.

The program would obviously have to have a physical presence cutoff date; i.e., you had to have been here before a certain time, and, of course, the applicant could not have a serious criminal record. Penalty fees and perhaps back taxes might also be in order and appropriate.

Resuscitating the DREAM Act, as opposed to DREAM Deferred Action, is another step toward a middle ground. Both of these measures do not absolve illegal aliens of their civil immigration violations. There are certain criteria that have to be satisfied.

However, provisions such as these recognize that certain people are here already; they are not leaving; many have settled here peacefully with substantial equities; and many just want to assimilate lawfully into and contribute to a society that they have come to call their home.

These generous provisions would have to be balanced, of course, by continued border enforcement as well as fraud recognition and deterrence, but it is possible. Unfortunately, it is not so much measures as attitudes that have to be fixed in order to repair the system.

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Finally, and never least, the biblical solution. While this nation is sadly becoming an amoral realm, there is still a call to apply Bible teachings about mercy and justice, piety and hard work on which the U.S. was founded and became the strongest country in the world. The U.S. is on the edge of God's severe judgment for abandoning him as it happened before when his people left him, following idols, in the Old Testament historical narrative.

A middle ground to address this issue should be a genuine interest for the sake of the nation and all people who live here: Set aside the politics in Congress, make activism, radical or populist, objective and realistic. Just look out for the good of the people and the blessing of living in a country like this.

The Rev. Dr. Luciano Márquez Jr. is pastor of The First Baptist Church of New Brunswick.

CANDOR

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have become known as the governor's YouTube moments, and it seems as if one or two are built into most of his speeches and press events.

Those moments have in part fueled what has become the national Christie phenomenon. Among many Republicans, he is the rock star, the one man capable of telling it like it is — that New Jersey and America are on the wrong track because of brutal tax burdens imposed to placate greedy public unions and to fund bureaucratic idleness.

When Christie talks about the "art of reckoning," fiscal conservatives nod their heads in agreement. When he tells people a public employee's reward for not taking sick days isn't a massive payout at the end of his or her career, it's "not being sick," the go-get-'em whoops can be heard from here to El Paso.

The governor, however, is not the only one saying these things. Take, for example, Indiana Gov. Mitch Daniels, who has a similar philosophy to Christie's but is much more reserved in his manner. What works in Indiana, however, doesn't work on YouTube.

Christie's moments fit the video website, which has become a home for oddball and sometimes cute offerings designed to shock or get a laugh. Some of the most popular are also the most baffling. One video of the completely unexplainable "Annoying Orange" has more than 112 million page views.

Even Klaus Nomi, a curious Manhattan counter-tenor who has been dead for nearly 30 years, has several videos with more than 1 million page views.

The purpose of the Christie videos, then, is not really to educate the masses; instead the videos are designed to introduce Christie to folks he normally would not reach. Some of them are in New Jersey, but many are from around the country.

As Christie continues to flirt with a growing national audience, expect YouTube to continue playing a role in spreading the message. It can be a shocking message; sometimes it might even be a little profane. But it has proven to be effective for a constituency still seeking a leader as fed up with government as they are.

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Gov. Chris Christie's YouTube channel passed 5 million page views on June 30. STAFF FILE PHOTO