

Letter to the Editor
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LETTERS & OPINIONS

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Hysterical Anti-Immigration Sentiment

This morning I attended the Cerritos Optimist Club's annual Oratorical Contest at the Sheraton. In addition to a delicious meal with parents, teachers and fellow Optimists, I heard the excellent inspirational speeches of seven students from the ABC School District.

As I listened, I noticed that all seven students had dark black hair. I reflected that all were either immigrants or the children of immigrants and that the future of our country will be enriched with their contributions and talents.

To me, the Oratorical Contest was a teaching moment for all the adults present. It was an opportunity to reflect on the immigration debate now raging in the United States.

I do not know if each of these students or their parents are documented or undocumented. However, this was on my mind as the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee takes up a series of proposed immigration reforms.

At the present time there exists a hysterical anti-immigration sentiment sweeping even Cerritos as evidenced by the Cerritos Republican Club inviting Jim Gilchrist, founder of the Minuteman Project, to address their meeting.

Recently, Cardinal Roger Mahony spoke out against this hysteria. He framed the immigration debate in moral

and ethical terms. He suggested that the Judeo-Christian tradition welcomed the immigrant.

Yes, some reforms are needed. As we say in our Optimist Creed ... spend so much time on our own self improvement that we have no time to be critical of others...

The Minutemen type would have it be a felony to help an undocumented immigrant. The priest, rabbi, iman, minister, etc. would have to have everyone show their papers before entering a house of worship.

What are we coming to as a country? What can we do about the mean-spirited hysteria? As we are all immigrants or children of immigrants (except for Native Americans) why can't we find ways to deal with our problems without being mean-spirited?

What are some considerations for reforming immigration? Here are some ideas being considered: 1) visas for family members of migrants to reduce what can be decades-long waits to reunify; 2) a guest worker program with a path to permanent residency; 3) legalization of undocumented migrants; 4) better legal process to guarantee immigrants rights; and 5) economic development in poor countries to reduce the need to migrate.

Yes, let's debate the issue of immigration but let us do it with a sense of justice, fairness and concern for all our fellow human beings on planet Earth.

*Charlie Ara
Cerritos*

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