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## How does America really feel about the children at the border?

by Pat Perriello

NCR Today

Protests continue to grow around the country when it comes to housing undocumented children while they await processing.

In Rhode Island, protester Terry Gorman said, "If there was a bus coming out of there and I knew it was all illegal alien children ... I'd lay down in front of the bus. ... That's going to be the destruction of the state of Rhode Island."

Michigan state Sen. Mike Kowall is introducing legislation to revoke the licenses of any organizations in the state housing illegal immigrant children.

Protesters marched with guns against children coming to Vassar, Mich. One protestor said another revolution is happening -- the people against the federal government.

Many additional articles could be cited, yet there are many others eager to show love and compassion for the children who left their homes in desperation to find hope in the land of the free.

Caring families and faith communities in Dallas are stepping up to the plate to support efforts to house children in their communities.

Catholic Charities in Baltimore is seeking to house about 50 children from Central America in a Baltimore County facility. Catholic Charities and the American bishops have been staunch advocates for the rights of immigrant children.

A college president in Detroit talks of the success of young students in his college who came from disadvantaged backgrounds. He wants to help capable young people from Central America with housing and scholarships.

Protests in north Texas illustrate the divide within communities as protests continue both for and against providing compassion to the young detainees.

The main argument raised against these unaccompanied children seems to focus on their illegality. Yet if they are refugees, they are not illegal. They are seeking asylum, like so many who have come to our shores over the years. Many are likely fleeing from danger, oppression and fear for their safety. Only a fair and legitimate process can determine the validity of their claims.

There is also much misinformation being spread about these young people. Are they members of gangs in their homeland, or are they fleeing from the reach of gangs in their neighborhoods? Can they really be carriers of diseases that don't exist in their countries? How can a busload of YMCA campers be mistaken for a busload of undocumented children invading the community?

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I am tempted to ask the real America to please stand up. Yet the truth is, we are both. We are both angry and compassionate. We have real frustrations and are at the same time a truly caring people. This is just one area that reflects the current fragmentation of our society. It is tearing us apart with no solution in sight.

How do we work through the impasse to determine the true character of America? The passage of the Senate's comprehensive immigration bill might be a good place to start. Finding a way to work together despite our differences is something all our representatives in Washington need to continue to strive for.

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