

Commentary: 10 ugly things about the immigration debate

STORY HIGHLIGHTS

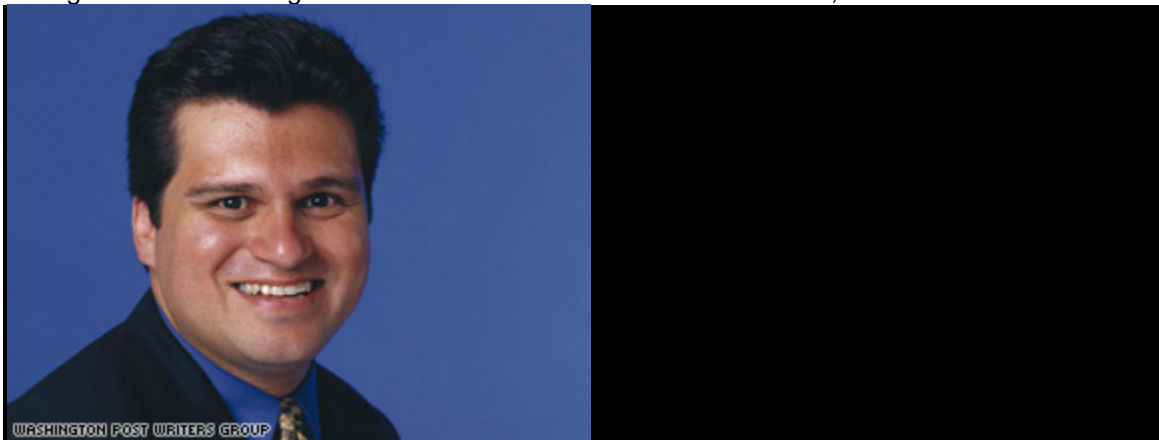
Ruben Navarrette shares what Hispanic readers are saying to him

He lists 10 things he says they find ugly about the immigration debate

Hypocrisy, racism are two items they find distasteful, columnist says

By Ruben Navarrette Jr.
Special to CNN

SAN DIEGO, California (CNN) -- In a recent commentary, I wrote that, as a Mexican-American, the ugliness of the immigration debate offends me -- not as a Mexican, but as an American.



Ruben Navarrette Jr. lists 10 things U.S.-born Hispanics find distasteful about the immigration debate.

A woman wrote in and asked me to be more specific: Just what was it about the immigration debate that was so ugly?

She came to the right place. After nearly 20 years of writing opinions and insisting that I don't speak for all Hispanics, in recent months, I've heard from hundreds of Hispanics who -- appreciative of my middle-ground approach to the immigration issue -- insist that I can speak for them anytime. So, with the authority vested in me, I'll now share some of what other Hispanics are saying.

It's not far off from what Janet Murguia had to say. As president of the National Council of La Raza, the largest Hispanic civil rights organization in the United States, Murguia recently delivered an important speech to the National Press Club. The topic: the

immigration debate and what she called a wave of hate sweeping the land -- one that isn't limited to illegal immigrants, but which is now affecting all Hispanics regardless of where they were born, what language they speak or what flag they salute.

The way Murguia sees it, **immigration** is "on the verge of becoming one of the largest civil rights issues of our generation." And, Hispanics are playing the piñata.

Murguia was right on the button. To borrow a phrase, it's getting ugly out there. And U.S.-born Hispanics see it as plain as day. Here are 10 things they find distasteful about this debate:

- The hypocrisy. We have two signs on the U.S.-Mexican border: "Keep Out" and "Help Wanted."
- The racism. With lightning speed, the debate went from anti-illegal immigrant to anti-immigrant to anti-Mexican.
- The opportunism. Too many politicians are trying too hard to portray themselves as tough on illegal immigration.
- The simple solutions. "Build A Wall." "Deport All Illegals." A quick rule of thumb: If it fits on a bumper sticker, it's not a workable policy.
- The naiveté. People ask why Mexico won't help stop illegal immigration. Hint: Last year, Mexicans in the United States sent home \$25 billion.
- The profiling. Dark skin and Spanish surnames shouldn't be proxies for undocumented status. Been to Arizona lately?
- The meanness. Nazi-produced Internet video games let players shoot illegal immigrants crossing the border. Fun stuff.
- The amnesia. Americans think grandpa was welcomed with open arms and that he plunged into the melting pot. Whatever.
- The buck-passing. Americans love to blame Mexico for their choices, yelling across the border: "Stop us before we hire again."
- The double standard. The same folks who have zero tolerance for illegal immigrants easily tolerate those who hire them.

Some of this is painfully familiar, recalling earlier versions of this debate as it played out a hundred or two hundred years ago. Hispanics are the new Germans, the new Irish, the new Italians. But it's also ugly. It was then. It is now.

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