



Americanus Speaks to Arizona's Immigration Crisis and to All of Us

On August 13, 1751, Ben Franklin was placed on a committee in the Pennsylvania Assembly to draft a bill dealing with the exclusion of criminals from the province, which a certain class of immigrants were in high proportion to all the rest.



Franklin was the perfect man for the job for it was a matter he had already addressed quite incisively in a delightful little parable he had written in the "Gazette" for 9 May 1751. Addressing himself as "Americanus," he aimed a bitter arrow at the British government, which insisted on exporting felons to the colonies, no matter how the colonies protested. It was, the mother country said, for the "improvement and well peopling" of America. Such parental concern, Americanus thought, called for some kind of filial acknowledgment, and at least the offer of repayment. Americanus had a plan. [\(1\)](#)

In some of the uninhabited parts of these provinces there are numbers of the venomous reptiles we call rattle-snakes: felons-convict from the beginning of the world. These, whenever we meet with them, we put to death, by virtue of an old law: Thou shalt bruise his head. But as this is a sanguinary law, and may seem too cruel; and as, however mischievous those creatures are with us, they may possibly change their natures if they were to change the climate; I would humbly propose that this general sentence of death be charged for transportation. In the spring of the year, when they first creep out of their holes, they are feeble, heavy, slow, and easily taken; and if a small bounty were allowed per head, some thousands might be collected annually and transported to Britain. There I would propose to have them carefully distributed in St. James Park, in the Spring Gardens and other places of pleasure about London; in the gardens of all the nobility and gentry throughout the nation; but particularly in the gardens of the prime ministers, the lords of trade, and members of Parliament, for to them we are most particularly obliged.

There might be some difficulties in the scheme, but no worse than went with the transporting of felons to America. "Let not private interests obstruct public utility. Our mother knows what is best for us. What is a little housebreaking, shoplifting, or highway robbing; what is a son now and then corrupted and hanged, a daughter debauched and poxed, a wife stabbed or a husband's throat cut, or a child's brains beat out with an axe, compared with this improvement and well peopling of the colonies?"

Whatever damage the rattle-snakes might do might be offset by their good example. "Might not the honest, rough British gentry, by a familiarity with these reptiles, learn to creep and to insinuate and to slaver and to wriggle into place (and perhaps to poison such as stand in their way): qualities of no small advantage to courtiers?"

This would be a just trade as well as gratitude for a favour. "Rattle-snakes seem the most suitable returns for the human serpents sent to us by our mother country. In this, however, as in every other branch of trade, she will have the advantage of us. She will reap equal benefits without equal risk of the inconveniences and dangers. For the rattle-snake gives warning before he attempts his mischief; which the convict does not." [\(2\)](#)



Written by [Dennis Behreandt](#) on July 26, 2010

Wit and wisdom? Yes - for all immigration plans, all “free” market ploys, all protection plans for the so-called inalienable right to move where-ever one pleases whenever one pleases, especially the sort that invite our neighbor’s worst to move in on us *illegally*, to feed off the fat of the land, and otherwise housebreak, shoplift, rob, rape, beat, corrupt, debauch, and pox, and then hand *us* the bill, an enormous bill at that ... are not equal, nor, frankly, seem to aim at the “improvement and well peopling of America.”

Maybe we should return the favor and let Mexico, and Cuba, and the nations of the Middle East, and all the other nations benefit from the lessons they may learn, that they ought to learn by having to tolerate, no, embrace and exalt the “legally challenged” who come to us so generously from them. And every American elitist and economic theorist too; let them relocate to America’s border towns and be set up in a permanent settlement to be educated and benefited and forever blessed from their infinite wisdom and love of liberty without bounds.

At least that’s how I see it ... and how I think Ben would see it too.

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Footnotes:

1. Orden, Carl Van. Benjamin Franklin, 1939, p. 201.
2. Ibid. pp. 201-202.



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