



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on May 3, 2010

## Many Latinos Favor Enforcing the Law

The controversy surrounding efforts by the State of Arizona to enforce federal laws against illegal immigration is usually presented as a conflict between those Americans who like Latinos in America and those Americans who are afraid of Latinos in America. A CNN news stories reveals, however, that a significant number of Latino-Americans who are in the nation legally or who are citizens of the United States strongly support cracking down on illegal immigration.



These Latinos understand that the issues involved related to legal or criminal behavior, not to national origin. The idea that Latinos would reflexively oppose laws which keep illegal immigrants out of America is as offensive as the notion that Americans of Japanese origin would resent enforcing laws that kept illegal immigrants from Japan out of the country or that Italian-Americans would not want laws against illegal immigration enforced against people from Italy.

When people move into America it is often to escape from the problems of the “old country.” That has historically meant adopting the ideals, the politics, and the laws of America in preference to what they left behind. Chinese immigrants in the 19th Century hardly wanted America turned into the impoverished, oppressive country of Imperial China. Chinese, Jews, Irish, Italians, and many other ethnic groups came to America because of a love of an America built around ordered liberty and that meant also built around a stable legal system. One of the joys of America is that immigrants have retained ethnic values and culture, while accepting the laws of this country. So, New York and Chicago are a smorgasbord of German, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Jewish, and Italian cuisines, all the while remaining one hundred percent American.

More importantly, all Americans, whether legal immigrants or citizens, have a powerful interest in compliance with our criminal laws, traffic laws, tax laws and so forth. During the worst years of Mafia violence in the 1920s and 1930s, the tool of deportation was used against legal immigrants to send criminals suspects (whose conviction might have been hard to prove) back to Italy. This did not send the Italian community here into a fit of rage. Why? The principal victims of mob violence and extortion were Italian immigrants and citizens, trying to earn a decent living in small shops and businesses in metropolitan areas.

Those who were “selling out” their own people in that context were not the small grocer or shoe repair



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shop owner, but instead the criminals who terrorized them and — even worse, in many ways — who ruined the hard-won reputation of these law-abiding Italians as good neighbors and hard workers. Latinos in America, either legal immigrants or American citizens, are much more likely to have their apartment burglarized, or car stolen, or family hurt by illegal immigrants than the average American. And some of these Latinos are not afraid to speak out openly in favoring of enforcing the laws of their adopted land.



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