

From Migrant Busing to Climate Change, Fake Virtue Abounds

The layers of hypocrisy are thick enough to shield you from the wind as you play golf on Martha's Vineyard.



WSJ, By [Gerard Baker](#), Sept. 19, 2022 1:41 pm ET

Venezuelan migrants wait to be transported to a local church after being dropped off outside the Naval Observatory in Washington, Sept. 15. PHOTO: STEFANI REYNOLDS/AGENCE



With the labor market [tight](#), you would think that the [transfer](#) of buses and planes of migrants to Democratic strongholds would be considered an economic opportunity for struggling liberal plutocrats.

[The Immigration War Between the States](#)

If you were a leading progressive warrior for diversity, equity and inclusion battling it out in the trenches of Martha's Vineyard, wouldn't you be delighted at the sudden arrival of a little extra (minimum-wage) help from down south to assist in the final push toward social justice?

What self-respecting ESG fund manager wouldn't welcome some additional (low-cost) labor to lower the Pride flag over her perfectly whitewashed clapboard colonial every evening or iron her copy of the [New York Times](#) in the morning?

But the layers of hypocrisy in our immigration debate are so thick you could wear them to shield yourself from the stiff breeze that can ruin your T-shot to the short 16th at the Edgartown Golf Club.

The White House calls the transfers "[shameful](#)." New York Mayor Eric Adams describes them as "[horrific](#)." Leading Democrats condemn them as "[literally human trafficking](#)" and "[crimes against humanity](#)."

Somehow the Biden administration's own [shipping](#) of thousands of migrants to New York, Los Angeles and elsewhere isn't judged by the same standards. Homeland Security Department officials reportedly [dubbed](#) the moves the "Abbott plan," in jocular homage to the earlier transfers organized by Texas Gov. Greg Abbott, whose actions progressives put on a moral par with those of the greatest despots in history.

I'm queasy about the spectacle of indigent human beings being bused and flown around the country in a giant game of political gotcha. But who bears the greater responsibility here?

It's easy to portray compassion for a refugee or a welcoming hand for the economically disadvantaged as a signifier of moral values. But the scales of virtue must balance, and it isn't simply a case of administrative incompetence but an act of abject moral failure by a government to fail to secure its borders.

There is no higher obligation for a sovereign power to its own people. The reckless toleration of the entry of hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions, of illegal immigrants threatens a nation's security, undermines its cohesion, interferes with its orderly economic and social functions. It places undue burdens on law-enforcement officers (against whom the president then issues casual calumnies) and actively undermines respect for the rule of law.

And yet these avatars of goodness lecture their opponents on the supposed moral repugnance of bringing the border crisis direct to the homes and streets of people for whom the effects of their neglect barely registers as an inconvenience.

This moral posturing by Democrats and their ubiquitous supporters in the culture is perhaps the most grating of the many irksome tendencies in our current politics' hyper-rhetoric. It is deployed to define the terms in every sphere of contemporary debate. Virtue votes Democratic: Only one side wants to save democracy, help the disadvantaged, distribute resources fairly, save the planet.

The left has always deemed itself morally superior—peace, love and understanding and all that. Conservative ideas and solutions are characterized as the product of self-interest, bigotry and greed. They might be grudgingly tolerated, but morally defensible in their own right? Never.

But where is the real moral high ground in these debates?

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It is not just immigration in which the left's virtue is fake. Take climate change. The obligation to reduce greenhouse-gas emissions has been established firmly as the ultimate moral imperative. If you oppose it you are condemning us literally to a future of hellfire—and doing so out of your own selfish desire to drive a big car or fly somewhere for a vacation.

But we are now seeing the terrible consequences of the power this fable has exercised over leaders for decades—in moral as well as economic terms. The reckless push to decarbonize has dramatically reduced the supply and increased the cost of energy, leaving hundreds of millions vulnerable to the twin shocks of scarcity and unaffordability in the wake of the war in Ukraine. How many people in Europe or the developing world will suffer or die this winter because of the climate extremists' monopoly of moral virtue?

Or take the arguments about economic distribution. The U.S. certainly has a serious challenge with inequality. It's unhealthy that modern capitalism creates vast disparities. But is it really immoral, as the contemporary political debate tells us?

American-led capitalism—unencumbered by the modern mandates of ESG, impact investing and the rest—has done an astonishing job of creating wealth for all, lifting more people out of poverty than any economic system ever devised. The morally righteous urge to rein it in has always led to greater poverty, and the current prevailing ideology will be no different.

There is no monopoly on virtue—anywhere in politics. But we can call out vice when we see it.