

The Root Causes of Illegal Immigration are Not Mysterious

We have heard for a while that the reason no direct action has been taken to stop the millions of people flowing across the southern border into the US in the past two years is that the root causes for their migration need to be discovered. And then, so it is said, those causes can be addressed.

This is, of course, all smoke and mirrors. The root causes for much of this migration are easily seen and could just as easily be addressed – if there was the heart for it.

Why do I say this?

I have just recently returned from a ministry trip to the eastern part of Cuba. Hurricane Ian swept over the western part of the island in the Pinar del Rio region. I went to the eastern province of Granma. Fortunately, they had not been hit. I arrived just after the hurricane had ravaged the western side of Florida. My trip was slightly delayed as the Miami airport was closed down briefly.

But, when I arrived in Cuba, I saw photos on Facebook from friends of the pastor who was my host, people who also are my friends. They were from that western region. They posted photos of empty refrigerators. They spoke of no electricity for days. They were a people forgotten by their government and deeply suffering – with food, water, electricity, damaged households, and transportation problems.

In the east where I was staying, the towns were totally dark night after night because there is often no electricity. This has been going on for months. Fortunately, our pastor friend has a generator because we had been able to donate it to his

congregation. As a result, they have refrigeration for food, lights for worship, and cool bedrooms in the tropical climate of Cuba.

For months before the generator, however, they had spent night after night with small, crying children, "I'm hot, mama, I cannot sleep."

The people have come to the church in recent months, and lamented to the pastor, "What food we have, Pastor, is spoiling." Fortunately, now, with the generator, the people can come to the church for various needs. And the church provides lunch for the children every week on Sunday. But that is one day and one meal.

Food shortages are very real in Cuba. You have to go to multiple shops so often in order to find something you need. If you have a little money, if you see something you need, you grab it because it might not be there again for a long time to come. Their government supplied rations are meager and may last a week.

People suffer from illnesses due to nutritional problems, but then when they need medicines or medical treatments, those are often not available. Oh, I know what naïve people have claimed for Cuba – that it has a marvelous, *free* medical system.

However, as I prayed at the altar for many people during this trip, a frequent request was, "Please pray for me. I need a surgery but cannot get it." Here is the note one woman pressed into my hand. I have translated it:

"Pastor, I have a malignant nodule on my thyroid gland and I have needed a surgery for three years, but I have not been able to get the surgery."

I was told that these delays in surgery were due to a lack of resources – sometimes for things as simple as surgical

sutures. They don't have them and so much more, so the surgery cannot be done.

As we drove to my friends' church from the airport – a 5 hour drive, we saw countless people along the road trying to hitchhike. The same thing when I left Cuba through a different airport which was also 5 miles away. This time we drove in the dark but still saw many people holding out a couple of pesos, hoping to get a ride.

Often there were horse carts, ox carts, trucks packed with people in the back and other forms of quaint travel. But so many people were on foot.

The system is tormenting. *Lack is the root cause of the migration.* It's no more complicated than that.

While I was there, I met mothers weeping over their kids who were on a boat or who had gone to Nicaragua to start the journey north to America. I met a family planning to emigrate to Spain, a young man on his way to Nicaragua, and a young family with a 1 year old planning to walk up through those deserts as clients of the ruthless coyotes and cartels. We prayed fervently for them.

Here is *my* hope for addressing the root causes. My hope is to begin to find people who will work together to supply pastors across Cuba with a small generator and an electric bike or motorcycle. If the pastor could have the ability to care for their home and congregation, perhaps he or she would stay. If they stay and give stability to the community, perhaps the community will choose to stay and work for the renewal of their homeland rather than emigrate.

If illegal immigration into the US troubles you, how can you address the root causes in this and other nations? What one simple act or gift can you give? To learn more about Cuba, listen **here**. (Live my Beloved Cuba with Pastor Arnaldo Pena Munoz, ep. 70).

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