

Most illegal immigrants exemplify American values

By PATRICK D. WEADON

In 1958, when he ran for the governorship of Alabama as a progressive, the late George Wallace tried mightily to avoid the issue of race. His campaign focused on issues like health, education and transportation. His goal was to bring Alabama and the South into the 20th century.

His opponent, John Patterson, ran a campaign based on the need to maintain segregation, and won going away. In 1962, having learned from his "mistakes," Mr. Wallace ran on a blatantly segregationist platform and won big. For the next 18 years, he would use hatred of African Americans as a tool to maintain his power.

This holds valuable lessons today. In the past two years, far too many politicians in our state, on both the left and the right, have been falling all over themselves in an effort to show how much they disdain illegal immigrants.

to the American way of life." Many of our fellow citizens are so busy condemning them that they forget that they are only fellow human beings trying to make their way in the world. The irony is that, in many ways, the throngs of right-wing politicians who loathe them should be the biggest defenders of illegals. Most illegals typify the values that conservative Americans hold dear. They work hard, often at multiple jobs. They believe that the family should be the centerpiece of society.

They are also people of faith. I have not taken a poll, but I would bet you that most of them would be against gay marriage and abortion. Many of them have also shown a propensity, despite the fact that they are not Americans in the official sense, to serve in our armed forces.

In short, most illegal aliens have more values in common with Rush Limbaugh than they do with most readers of *The New York Times*. They are not against the American way of

life; rather they are, in many respects, sterling examples of what it means to be an American.

And yet, many of our elected officials have joined the "Let's send them back to where they came from" crowd. After all, they say these people entered the country illegally.

The rule of law is important. But I refuse to believe that some sort of compromise cannot be worked out to bring these hardworking people out of the shadows and into the mainstream of American life.

They should pay a price for their actions. But, at the same time, society should recognize that, save for the way they entered the country, most of them have been model citizens.

Illegal immigrants are not from Mars. They are people just like you. It is a good bet that the dish you eat off of in your favorite restaurant has been washed by one. It is also likely that you know someone whose lawn and shrubs have been maintained by

one. If you are in the construction business, much of the grunt work you do on site has been performed by illegals.

So if they are here performing necessary work and making valuable contributions to society, why in God's name would you want to send them back?

It took George Wallace 18 years to admit that African Americans were not animals out to destroy Southern womanhood but people just like him. Our elected representatives would do well to remember that there is no such thing as an "illegal" human being.

Let us hope Marylanders reject the know-nothing mentality that seems to be in vogue and see illegal immigrants for what they really are: hardworking people who deserve our respect and our assistance.

The writer is a Severna Park resident.

Guest column

Actually, Marylanders of all political stripes agree that we need to have control over who gets to enter the country. In addition, few of us would argue against the deportation of illegal immigrants who commit felonies or participate in the criminal activities of groups like MS-13.

The controversy is not over these common-sense issues, but rather over whether to "punish" the majority of those who have illegally entered the country.

But most illegal immigrants are not criminals or gang members. Most came here to work to build a better life for themselves and their families.

Yet, despite the fact that they work hard and stay out of trouble, they are perceived by far too many as a "threat