

OPINION

BILLIONAIRES IN GLASS HOUSES CASTIGATING THE EMPLOYMENT OF UNDOCUMENTED IMMIGRANTS



Who Cleans the Windows of Glass Houses?

Many ensnarled by a 'nanny-gate'

BY RAUL A. REYES

Et tu, Lou?

It turns out that Lou Dobbs has employed undocumented workers to toil on his estates and tend to his family's numerous horses. The boy for the anti-immigrant crowd said he was told the workers were legal immigrants. What he didn't say, as he did in April 2006, was that "employers who hire illegal aliens should face felony charges."

Perhaps Dobbs is getting tips from Meg Whitman.

The former e-Bay CEO has spent at least \$140 million of her own money trying to become the next governor of the Golden State. On the campaign trail, she pledged to be "tough as nails" on illegal immigration. She has vowed to hold employers accountable with fines, inspections, and jail time. She has promised Latinos "más trabajos" (more jobs).

Then her former housekeeper surfaced in public. Whitman, it turns out, employed an undocumented immigrant in her home for nearly a decade. Rather than accept personal responsibility, Whitman blamed the media, unions, her opponent, and her ex-maid for the situation. Sadly, for one Latina, the result was not más trabajos, but no trabajo.

Politicians of both parties regularly be-

come ensnarled in their own "nanny-gates." No wonder, since the Pew Center estimated in 2009 that 29 percent of the nation's housekeepers are undocumented. Zoe Baird lost her chance to serve as Bill Clinton's attorney general because of her undocumented help. Linda Chavez lost her shot as George W. Bush's Secretary of Labor over her undocumented maid.

Let's review the facts surrounding Whitman's housekeeper flap. Nicandra Diaz-Santillan admits she lied about her immigration status to the agency that Whitman used to hire her. In 2009, after working for Whitman for nine years, Diaz confessed she was illegal. She was fired.

Whitman claimed not to have seen the "no-match" letters regarding her housekeeper sent by the Social Security Administration. When Diaz produced one of these letters, which included a handwritten note by Whitman's husband saying, "Nicky, look into this," the gubernatorial candidate said she didn't recall seeing it. Still, that doesn't absolve Whitman of her responsibilities as an employer, especially considering she is a candidate who touts her savvy business skills.

Once she learned Diaz was undocumented, Whitman had a duty to notify immigration authorities. She didn't do that, despite her relentless campaign message of holding employers responsible for hiring illegal workers. So either Whitman considers herself above the law or she was knowingly breaking it. I

would hardly call this being "tough as nails" on illegal immigration.

Whitman maintains she didn't turn Diaz in because she was "a friend and a member of my extended family." Really? When her housekeeper admitted she was undocumented, Whitman axed her on the spot. Given that Whitman has broken spending records in her quest to become California's next governor, couldn't she have helped her housekeeper out... a little? A consultation with an immigration attorney might have cost \$200. Apparently, Diaz's plight wasn't worth the trouble to the Silicon Valley billionaire.

For those who rail against "amnesty" for illegal immigrants, these controversies expose tremendous hypocrisy. In the Dobbs and Whitman cases, we see once again that immigration is a personal as well as a political problem, one that can only be solved through comprehensive reform, not "get-tough" rhetoric. Whitman's "enforcement only/no amnesty" is a bad policy for California. And she offers no solution to one of the most contentious issues of the immigration debate: what to do with the millions of undocumented workers who are already here?

Amazingly, Whitman still doesn't get it. Even after this controversy arose, she has continued to insist on holding employers accountable. She might as well add, except if it's her.

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