



Old Astoria Neighborhood Association (OANA)
www.OANA-NY.org

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Op Ed

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The Migrant Crisis and our local schools.

As everyone knows, the influx of Migrants to our city, and the cost local government must pay to ensure their guaranteed living conditions has put a strain on our city.

OANA's overriding position is that this is an Interstate, not in intrastate issue. Because both international and state borders are being crossed, the Federal Government has the indisputable authority and responsibility to deal with migrant workers and asylum seekers. They alone have the resources, both financial and diplomatic, to come up with a solution that protects everyone's rights. And our entire federal system is based upon the Washington's responsibility to deal with any issues that involve international relations and multiple states.

If the federal government continues to shirk that responsibility and try and dump it on states and cities, then it is rejecting its entire reason for existence.

Therefore, we call upon our Federal Officials to fully fund our city and state costs to ensure that our responsibilities to Migrant and Asylum seekers are fully realized.

And most importantly, they come up with a holistic program to deal fairly with any immigrants, including guest worker programs and paths to citizenship, fully enforceable by the Federal Govt that meets clearly stated standards for eventual citizenship plus our needs to supplement our labor force. And they must also enforce penalties against those who would try and circumvent these newly established policies. (The last was in 1986 under Reagan...This is completely irresponsible of our federal Government, putting politics above good government)

OANA feels, however, that while the macro issues that are being thoroughly discussed, (such as the Right to Work, Federal responsibilities, and Sanctuary City status) are all very important, we also need to look at the smaller operational issues that can help in the short term.



To this end, we would like to propose that English classes be set up as soon as possible



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at the various facilities housing the migrants. These classes should be immersive, can be perhaps 8 hours per day just utilizing English (There is not better or quicker way to pick up a basic understanding).

We know the city is hiring more ESL teachers and offering them tenure. The only difference we are proposing is where they hold their classes, and that they be all day long..

We feel that a basic knowledge of English will serve the youth in the shelters, as they will be able to have a better understanding of the curriculum they are taught in our public schools. As a matter of fact, it might be better not to have them enter the school system until they have the necessary language skills needed. Also, this would help make sure that valuable teaching resources meant for those who have the necessary language skills would not have to be diverted to English classes on site. We can instead offer them an immersive English language course at their housing facilities, and in a few months many should have the basic skills needed to truly benefit from our public schools.

These classes should also be offered to adults, so they can develop skills to enter the job market when available plus helping them understand their rights when interacting with our legal system and bureaucracy.

We have been told that many students have being denied entrance to the school of their choice because the migrant/asylum seekers are being prioritized. If this is true, by preparing the students at their housing facilities before entering the student body at our schools will open spots for those deserving students that are now being denied entrance.

Richard Khuzami, President