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## *Commentary on Prop. 187*

As a card-carrying liberal with impeccable credentials, let me defend supporters of Proposition 187 against the charge of racism. If pro-187 Californians were racist, we would have long been familiar with the sight of organized groups picketing the fields of the Central Valley, or on the sidewalks of Los Angeles's Garment District, alerting us to the dangers to our cultural and genetic purity posed by low-paid Mexican farm workers and Guatemalan seamstresses.

Over the decades during which the illegal population grew to its current level, the average pro-187 voter most likely combined a generosity of spirit toward them with an instinctive sense that providing their children with an education, or a modicum of medical care, was worth the benefits of having a pool of cheap labor available. The average illegal alien will clean up your yard, or help you with your plumbing project, for far less than an out-of-work aerospace engineer (or your neighbor's son or daughter) would charge.

Only when California's economic improvement remained glacially slow, and Californians began to sense that hopes for a better life might have to be scaled down, did that most common of all human weaknesses surface: the need for a scapegoat. And, when one was found, the emotional frenzy invariably produced by scapegoating resulted in the creation and passage of bad law. Only the naive believe that the illegal immigrant from Mexico, Central America or China will now pack up and go home.

My advice to my liberal friends: Racism is not the issue here. Thoughtlessness is.

— **Bill Becker**  
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