

# Look West, Miss Liberty, and

By Art Buchwald

The Statue of Liberty was gazing toward Europe when I tapped her on her shoulder. "Ma'am," I said, "if you look the other way, we have about 130,000 Vietnamese refugees coming in from Guam and the Philippines. I thought you might hold your torch high and light the way for them."

The statue seemed irritated. "We have too many people in this country now. What am I going to do with 130,000 Orientals?"

"The same thing you did with everybody else. Welcome them. They're tired and they're poor and they are yearning to breathe free."

"And what about jobs? Who is going to support them?" she said petulantly.

"You never worried about that before," I said. "Whoever came to this country eventually found jobs, and almost all of them made very good citizens. There is no

reason to think the Vietnamese will be different. After all, you are the mother of exiles."

"Times have changed," she growled. "The American people are not that thrilled about having a bunch of refugees dumped on them. Who is going to feed them? How many will go on welfare? How do we know their kids won't get in trouble in the streets? We have enough problems in this country without asking for more."

"But," I pleaded, "we're responsible for them being refugees. We screwed up a country like it's never been screwed up before. We supported their corrupt governments, loaded them down with weapons they couldn't use, defoliated their rice paddies and wrecked their families."

"We left the country in a mess. The least we can do is take in whatever huddled masses escaped to our teeming shore."

"That's easy for you to say," the Statue of Liberty replied, "but we have to think of Americans first. They

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don't want any more foreigners in this country."

"But most of our fathers and grandfathers and great-grandfathers were foreigners. You've welcomed them all. Tell me the truth. Do you have anything against Orientals?"

"I don't personally. But you know how some people are. The Vietnamese have different habits, and they're from another culture. They just don't fit in. Besides I'm supposed to welcome the homeless from Europe. That's why I'm looking in that direction."

"These people need refuge," I protested. "Their lives are in ruins. Remember a few weeks ago when they flew in orphans from Vietnam and Cambodia? Nobody seemed to object to that."

"It's not the same thing," the statue said. "You can adopt orphans. But what can you do with refugees?"

"Help them find homes, jobs, make them citizens."

"It's out of the question. It isn't our fault they lost the war. Look, no one minds one or two Vietnamese in a

community. But you're talking about thousands. They'll stick out like a sore thumb. The unions would never stand for it."

"Please don't turn your back on them," I begged. "If somebody just said, 'Welcome. We're glad you came,' most Americans would go along with it. The American people gripe a lot, but they'll do the right thing if somebody leads them. If you could shine your torch toward the Golden Gate bridge, perhaps the people will be ashamed of the way they've behaved."

The Statue of Liberty turned slowly. There was a tear in her eye. "I've been here so long I almost forgot why I was holding this lamp. Where did you say I should shine my torch?"

"Over there. Hold it as high as you can and point it toward the West so every American can see it. That's it. Now repeat after me, 'Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door.'"